

School History From 1851

BY ALTHEA PROFFITT
The first high school in Yancey County was established in Burnsville in the year 1851 by the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church. The building was erected by local citizens on what is now the site of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dover Fouts. It came to be called Burnsville Academy.

Yancey County, at that time, included what is now a large part of Madison County, all of Mitchell County and part of what is now Avery County, though Madison became a county during that same year.

Not only were there no high schools in the county but such schools as existed were in small buildings, often of logs, were poorly furnished with rough benches and heated only by fireplaces. Books were few and inadequate and the teachers were often poorly prepared. The school term was usually two or three months. Occasionally a gifted teacher could produce good results even in such circumstances, somewhat on the principal that "Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other would constitute a college."

But the people were eager for good schools and welcomed the new high school. The Rev. Stephen D. Adams was sent by the Conference as the first principal. He seems to have been a man of unusual ability. A fellow member of the Conference wrote of him: "He is an accurate scholar and a prodigious genius. I

heard him preach often and he would have taken rank as an orator in any age."

THE SCHOOL PROSPERS
The school, backed by local trustees, grew and prospered and students continued to come from a large surrounding area. There were no dormitories and so students were taken care of in boarding houses and in private homes.

In 1852 the French Broad Baptist Institute was opened in what is now the town of Mars Hill. This school also prospered and was the nucleus of Mars Hill College.

Naturally a number of students were lost to the Academy but it still had a large territory from which to draw students.

NEW PRINCIPAL
In 1854 Rev. Stephen Adams died and was buried in what is now Academy Hill Cemetery. Rev. Richard M. Price was sent by the Holston Conference to replace him and he continued as principal until succeeded by Rev. T.P. Thomas, a graduate of Emory and Henry College. He was lauded by Mr. Price as "a fine scholar and a fine Christian gentleman".

Mr. Thomas continued as principal until a short time before the beginning of the Civil War. Rev. Henry Ammons filled in the remaining time until the outbreak of war, when the school was closed.

THE WAR YEARS
Sporadic efforts were made to keep the school open during the war years, but it

was finally closed until the war ended.

Unimpeachable evidence has been given that during the very unsettled period before the close of the war a small detachment from Col. Kirk's infamous forces seized and occupied the building and part of it was burned during this time.

Here, I think, some praise should be given to the trustees of the school. Their names are not known but I think anyone familiar with the history of the town could suggest a number of substantial citizens who might have been on the Board. Though we have no such record, the Holston Conference must have withdrawn its support at the beginning of, or during, the war. So the Trustees must have repaired the building and secured a new principal.

AFTER THE WAR
After the war, the first principal of the Academy was Mr., or, as all high school principals were at that time called, Professor Merriweather Lewis. A friend of his said later that he was, "a great scholar, a great instructor and a moral lighthouse." And Dr. John McLeod, in his history of Mars Hill College, where Professor Lewis went as president two years later: "He was the most liberally educated man to teach at the college during the first thirty years of its history."

To speak of a man as a great scholar in those days meant that he was proficient in Greek and Latin, which were almost required studies

in a high school curriculum; which usually included languages—Greek, Latin and English, mathematics and history, very little Science and no agriculture, crafts or home economics.

LATER YEARS-PRINCIPALS
After Professor Lewis, very little is known of the work of the Academy except the names of its principals, which are as follows, though perhaps not in order in which they served: John Simley, John H. Rhein, Dr. W.M. Austin, James Gudger, John C. Ewin, J.C. Britt, E.E. Hawkins, and C.R. Hubbard—all, of course, with the title of Professor.

In the later years of the Academy, because of the unsafe conditions of the old building, classes were taught in the County Courthouse.

In 1898 Stanley McCormick School was opened in Burnsville by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and Professor C.R. Hubbard accepted the position as its first principal.

The Academy was closed as it seemed no longer necessary.

In 1901 the Baptist denomination opened another high school in Burnsville called the Yancey Collegiate Institute. The first principal was Professor E.E. Hawkins, who served in this capacity for many years.

These two schools served the community well for a number of years, until the first State high school was opened in Burnsville.

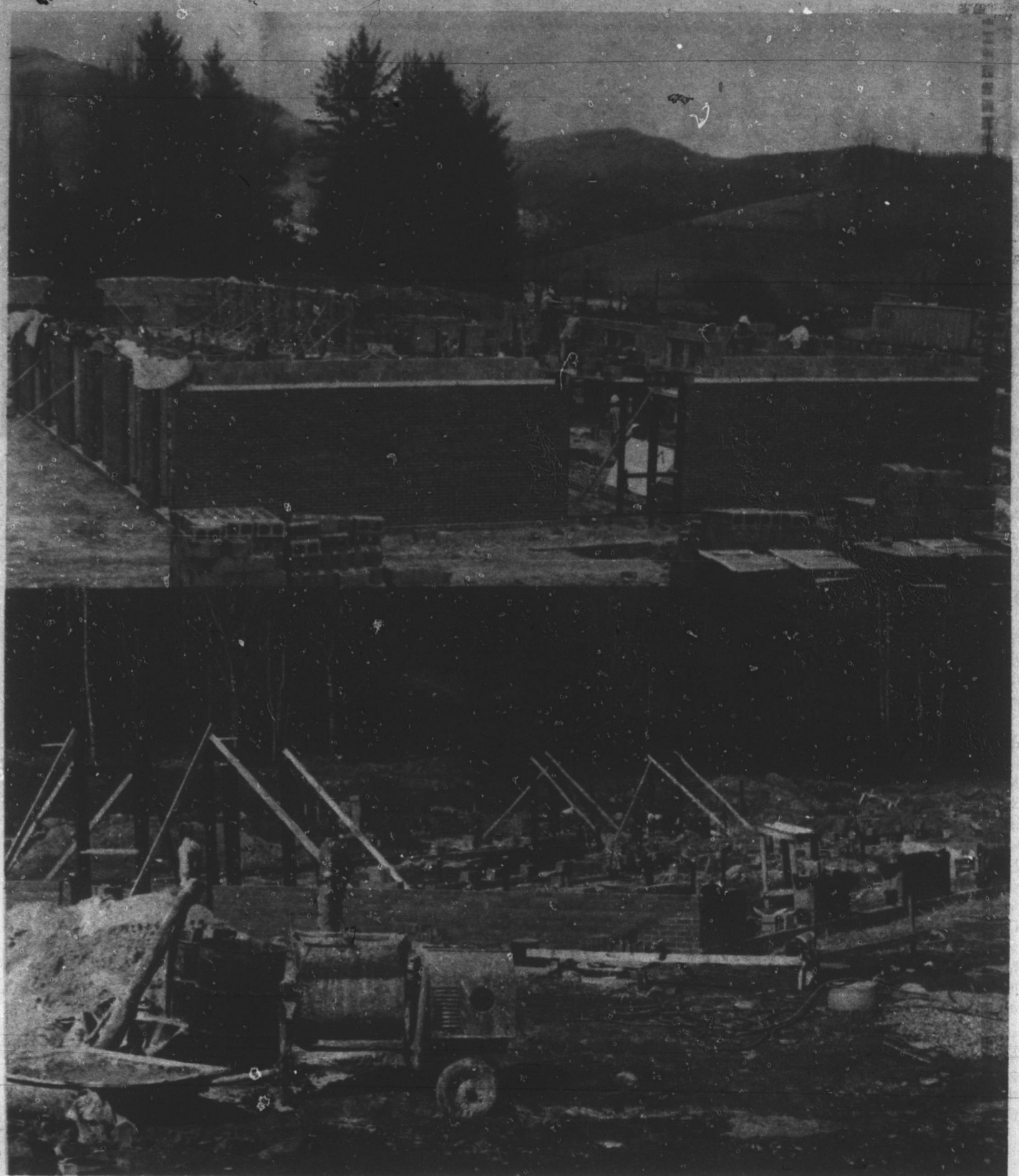


Photo By Brian Westveer

Burnsville Hospital Construction

The Burnsville hospital is taking shape quickly. From one week to the next, the site changes greatly. The new hospital, long planned as a part of the two-county Blue Ridge Hospital System, is expected to be completed early in the spring of '77.

Yancey County Middle Schools To Include Grades Six, Seven, Eight

Yancey County's two new middle schools will contain all Yancey County students in grades six, seven and eight, when schools open in August 1976. This decision was reached by the Board of Education at its meeting on March 4, following an extensive study of the alternatives.

During the month of January, public meetings were held in all the elementary school districts in the county. These meetings were publicized through The Yancey Journal, Radio Station WKYK, and elementary grade students were given individual schedules of the meeting to carry home to their parents. In each meeting, which was conducted by the Superintendent of Schools, and attended by members of the Board of Education, several alternatives for the reorganizational plan were presented and all persons in attendance were asked to offer opinions and express their desires. While a variety of opinions were expressed in most of the meetings, the final tally revealed that the majority of the parents in the majority of the meetings favored a middle school that would contain grades 6-8.

In its meeting on March 4, the Board asked for opinions of the newly elected middle school principals, the Director of Instruction, the NCAE President and others present for their opinion on the matter. The vast majority of those present felt that the most ideal organization for a successful middle school program would be one containing grades 6-8. Cane River School will contain students from Bald Creek, Bee Log, Clearmont and the western half of the Burnsville School district. East Yancey will contain students from Micaville, Pensacola, South Toe and the eastern half of the Burnsville School district. Each school will enroll approximately 400 students.

Free Wildlife Food Available To Landowners From ASCS

BY RAY DORSETT
Soil Conservationist

If you are a landowner in Yancey County with some vacated spots in your fields, or have some unused or eroding areas on your farm or homesite, maybe you should consider planting these areas to wildlife food. Not only would this practice be helpful to wildlife, but it would be of little cost to you because you can presently obtain applications for free seeds through the Soil Conservation Service. Annual, Perennial and reseeding Perennial mixtures are available. Quantities of seeds can be ordered for 1/8 acre or more. They provide excellent habitat and food stuff for animals and birds. Some of the plant varieties offered are mixtures of soybeans, cowpeas, millet and lespedeza.

This year the ASCS office is also offering cost-assistance to some landowners on the purchasing of fertilizer for planting these areas. If you are interested in helping wildlife and putting unactive acres of land into useful wildlife production areas, consider planting this wildlife cover which can be obtained through the Soil Conservation Service. Call or write us for an application now so that you will receive your seed in time for planting.

The Soil Conservation Service also has pamphlets on wildlife which you may be interested in obtaining.

Reminder
Give your neighbors a chance to read. Look through your books and see if any should be returned to the library.



Photo By Brian Westveer

Still Mill To Spin Soon

The familiar weather-worn landmark in Loafer's Glory, Mitchell County, is coming back to life under the enthusiastic expertise of William Hensley, the new millwright. The non-profit ABCD Foundation was created to salvage the old Mill and dam from further deterioration. The sagging timbers have already been relieved of the weight of obsolete equipment. The badly eroded foundation is being reformed and the wheel and millrace will be welded. It is hoped that the charm of the building and the effect of the water-turned-wheel will create memories for generations to come.

Trustees of the ABCD Foundation are represented locally by Herbert Brydon, Mari Askew Brydon, Susan Askew, and William Hensley. They hope residents will recognize the benefits of the project for the community and will respond as they are able with elbow grease, materials, funds, or advice. Persons with questions or historical or anecdotal bits, pertinent or whimsical about the Mill may contact Mari Askew Brydon, Route 3, Box 193, Bakersville 28705 or phone 688-2415.



Mayland Tech Building 50% Completed

According to information presented to a construction conference by Charles L. McMurray, architect, the Mayland Technical Institute building is roughly 50% completed. Occupancy of the building is now expected to be November 1, 1976. This is another "Picture" Progress Report on the Mayland Tech building.