

EARLY BEGINNINGS



1895—Mason's Building

Teachers are Alys May Corr, unknown, Belle McEwen, Jim Southerland Gertrude McFall, Dennis Cason, supervisor, & Rev P.W. Corr. In center seated are M.S. Stevens & Alice Heard
On the right are students: Joe McEwen, Mel McEwen, Lewis Bostick, Yancy Teachy, unknown, & Jes McEwen These boys played in the band under the direction of Professor Corr.

Second row: Miss Willie Green, Cora Southerland, Maude Wilkinson & Leland Carlton. Other children pictured: Effie Branch, Myrtle McEwen, Bessie Branch, Flossye McEwen, Lloyd Carlton, Pearl McEwen, Valda Bostick, Mallie Wiggins, Tom Wiggins, Alfred Cochran, Floy Hendry, & Earl Carlton seated on the far right.

Source: Watch Wauchula Win, Margaret Stringer, Photo from Bertie Southerland Forrest

As pioneers began to travel southward, settlements began emerging throughout the region that is now known as Hardee County. These communities opened make-shift schools in homes, neighborhood churches, and one-room log cabins to provide their children with a proper education.

Grades 1- 8 were taught with all grades combined into a single classroom. The main subjects included the three "R"s: Reading, Writing and 'Rithmetic. The curriculum comprised memorization of multiplication tables, spelling words, and chapters or verses from the Bible and other literary works. Spelling bees and recital of subject content reinforced what was taught in the classroom. There was also an emphasis on addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.



Wauchula School, undated but written on the back
"1st School House & Annex to it in Wauchula."

Source: CrackerBarrel Rootsweb.com,
Photo from Betty White



Wauchula School

Source : CrackerBarrel Rootsweb.com,

Photo from Betty White

Strawberry Schools

Our schools were known as the "Strawberry Schools" because the school terms were scheduled around the harvesting of the strawberry crop.

Classes would begin in July and then close in December through March. During the harvest, this calendar enabled the children to pick berries along side of their parents and other siblings. Then the schools would reopen during the middle of March.

This practice continued in the Hardee County Schools until the mid 1950's.



Wauchula Schools

In 1884, the first school house was located west of town in a log cabin which housed 120 students. The principal of the school was Rev. T.J. Sparkman and his assistant was Mary A. Payne. In 1895, a new school was built at South 8th Avenue and Bay Street by the Masons. The Masons referred to the school as the "Wauchula School". The building consisted of two floors. The Masonic Hall was on the top floor and the school was located on the bottom floor.



1895

Dennis Marion Cason

First Supervisor of Wauchula Schools.

Source: Watch Wauchula Win, Margaret Stringer, Photo from Marjorie Cason Durrance

Mr. Dennis Marion Cason helped in the construction of the building because he was very interested in education. He would encourage parents to enroll their children in school. Therefore, when the school opened; he was appointed Supervisor and Rev. T.J. Sparkman became Superintendent. Mr. R.D. Moore became the new principal and Helen Carlton was assigned as the assistant. They had very little money then. There was only \$100 allotted for supplies.

There was also a grading committee which was selected for examinations on September 2, 1895. The committee decided that examinations would be held in September. The committee members were: R.D. Moore, C.J. Carlton and George W. Harp.

Class of 1908



Class of 1908, taken at the schoolhouse on South Eighth Avenue and Bay Street.

The next year classes were moved to the new brick school on West Oak Street and North Seventh Ave. Professor Shaver was principal.

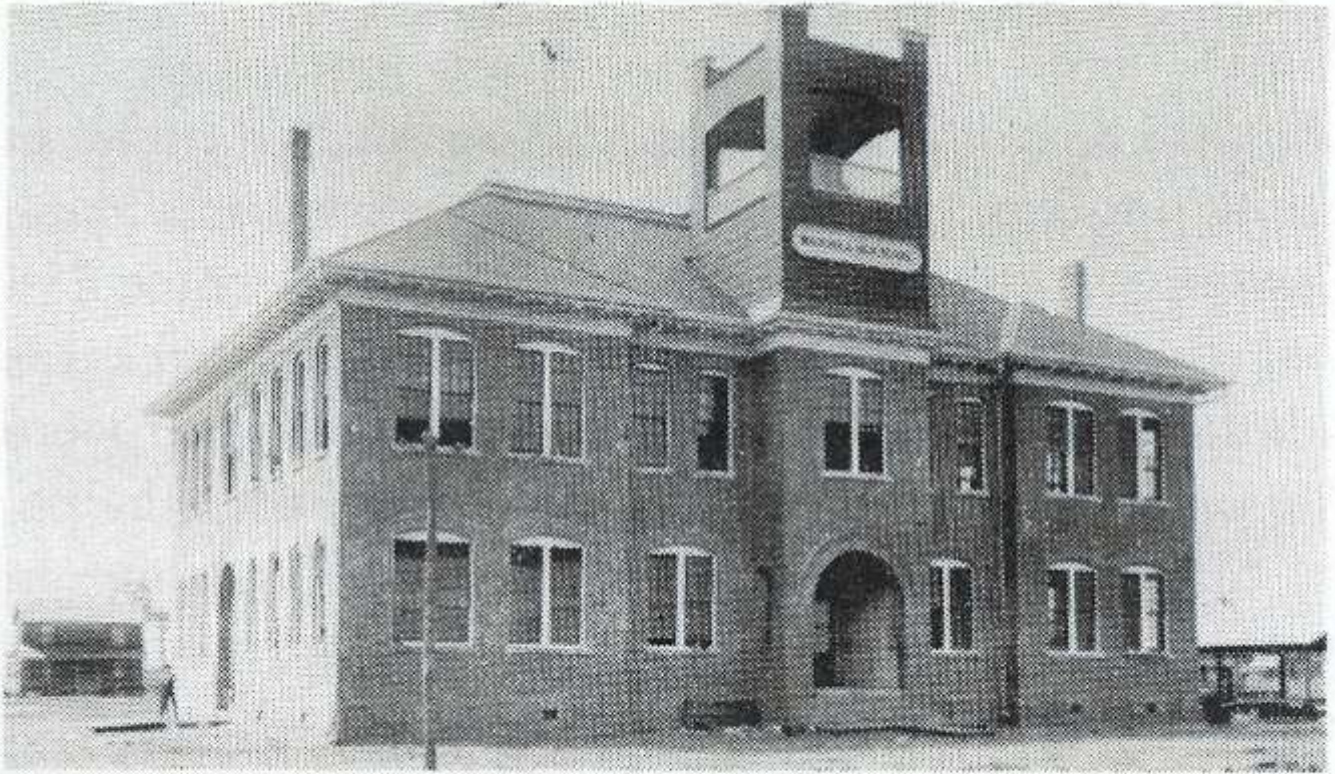
Source: Watch Wauchula Win, Margaret Stringer, Photo from Emerson Clavel

New Brick School in 1909

In 1909, students moved to the new brick school located on West Oak Street and North Seventh Avenue. This was the first of the three units to be built. The location for this building would be on the east side of the complex.

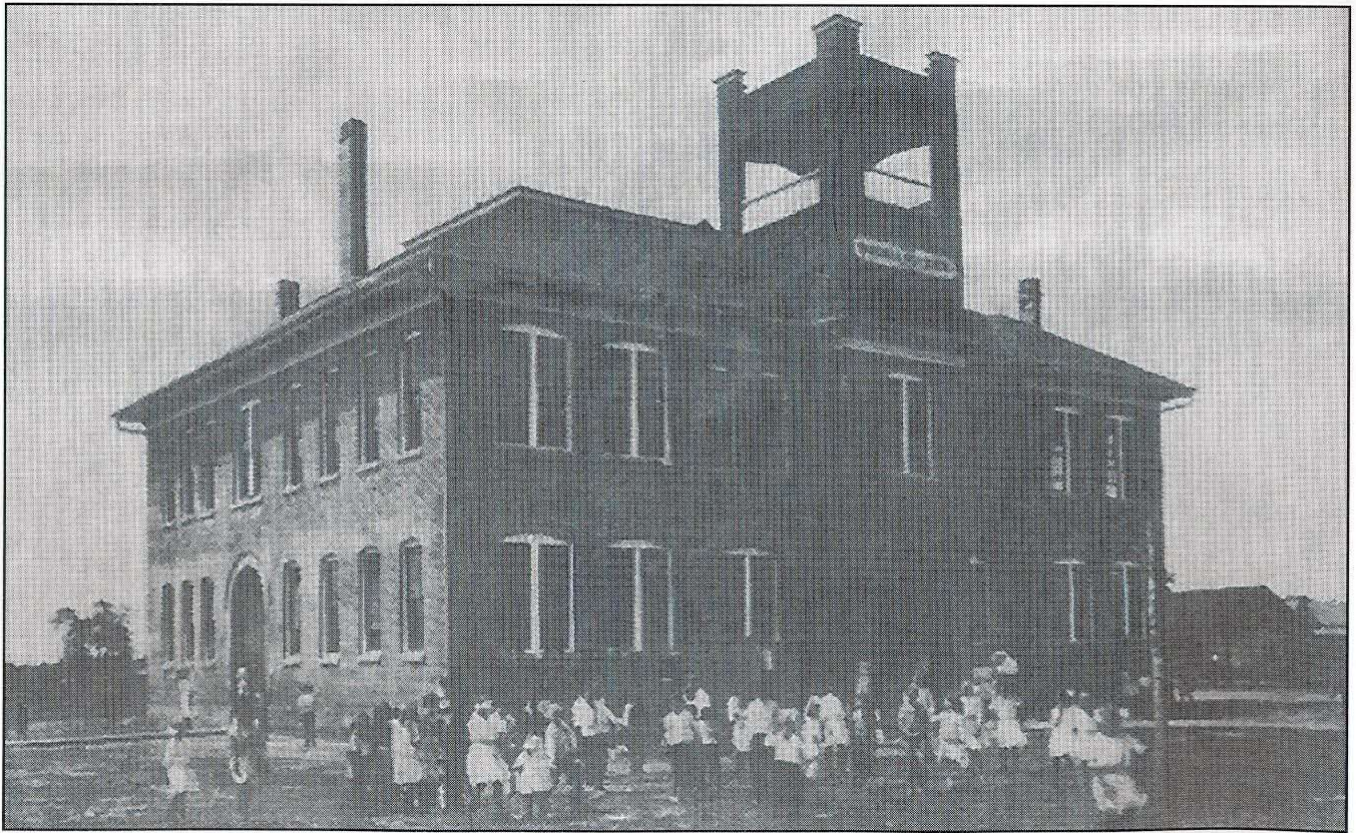
The school was named, "Wauchula High School," complete with a bell tower. The school housed all grades at the time of the initial opening.

Professor Joseph Wilson became the principal and the staff comprised of 4 teachers.



First unit of the school complex built in 1909, faces east, on the corner of West Oak Street and North Seventh Avenue. Loaned by Frances Causey.

Source: Watch Wauchula Win, Margaret Stringer,
Photo from Frances Causey



Wauchula High School in 1913

Over Crowded Schools Contin

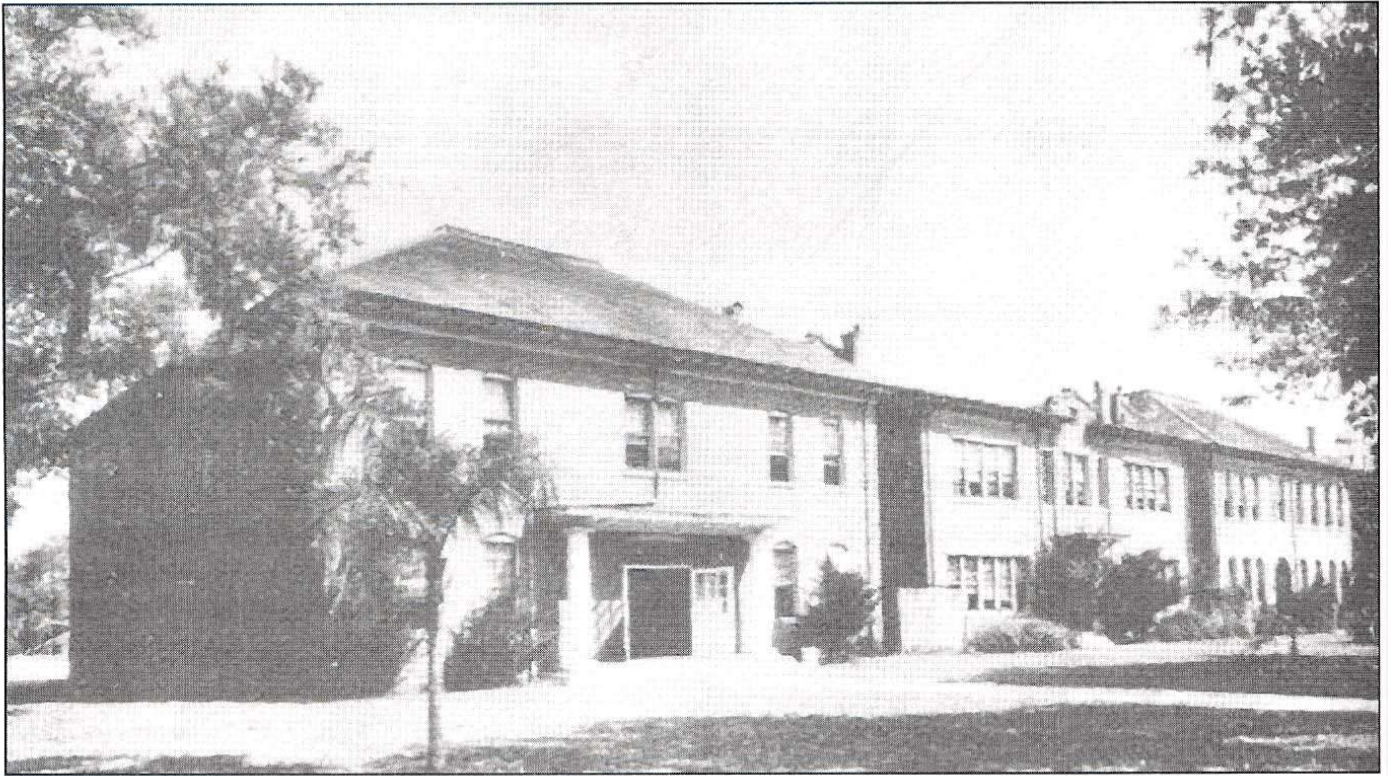
In 1915, the 2nd building was erected to help elevate the continuing crowded conditions due to increasing enrollment.

Compensatory Law

July 1919, the Compensatory Law went into effect requiring that all children were to attend school. Therefore, the third unit was added connecting the two other buildings at the cost of \$25,000.

In 1920 the enrollment of students reached 950. Over crowdedness occurred in the lower grades. Enrollment showed that the 3rd grade had 117 students and the 4th grade had 120 students. Miss Ella Beeson had to hold double sessions to accommodate the numbers both morning and afternoon.

W.R. Gramling was the Superintendent and Professor W.E. Sawyers was the Principal of the High School.



Three building complex located on West Oak Street. The far right building was the High school 1909, far left was built in 1915 and became the Grammar school. Finally, in 1920 the center building was erected.

Source: Watch Wauchula Win, Margaret Stringer.

Board of Public Instruction Formed in 1921

The creation of Hardee County began on April 23, 1921, when the Senate Bill Number 51 went into effect. This Bill divided Desoto County into 4 additional Counties: Hardee, Highlands, Glades and Charlotte.

The law also required each of the five counties to hold a conference to determine and assume the responsibility of Public Instruction respectively. This included equitable division of any left-over funds, debts and personal property.

On May 4, 1921, the Board was officially appointed in the three districts:

District 1: Bowling Green, Ft. Green, Ona - W.R. Minor

District 2: Wauchula area - S.B. Hogan

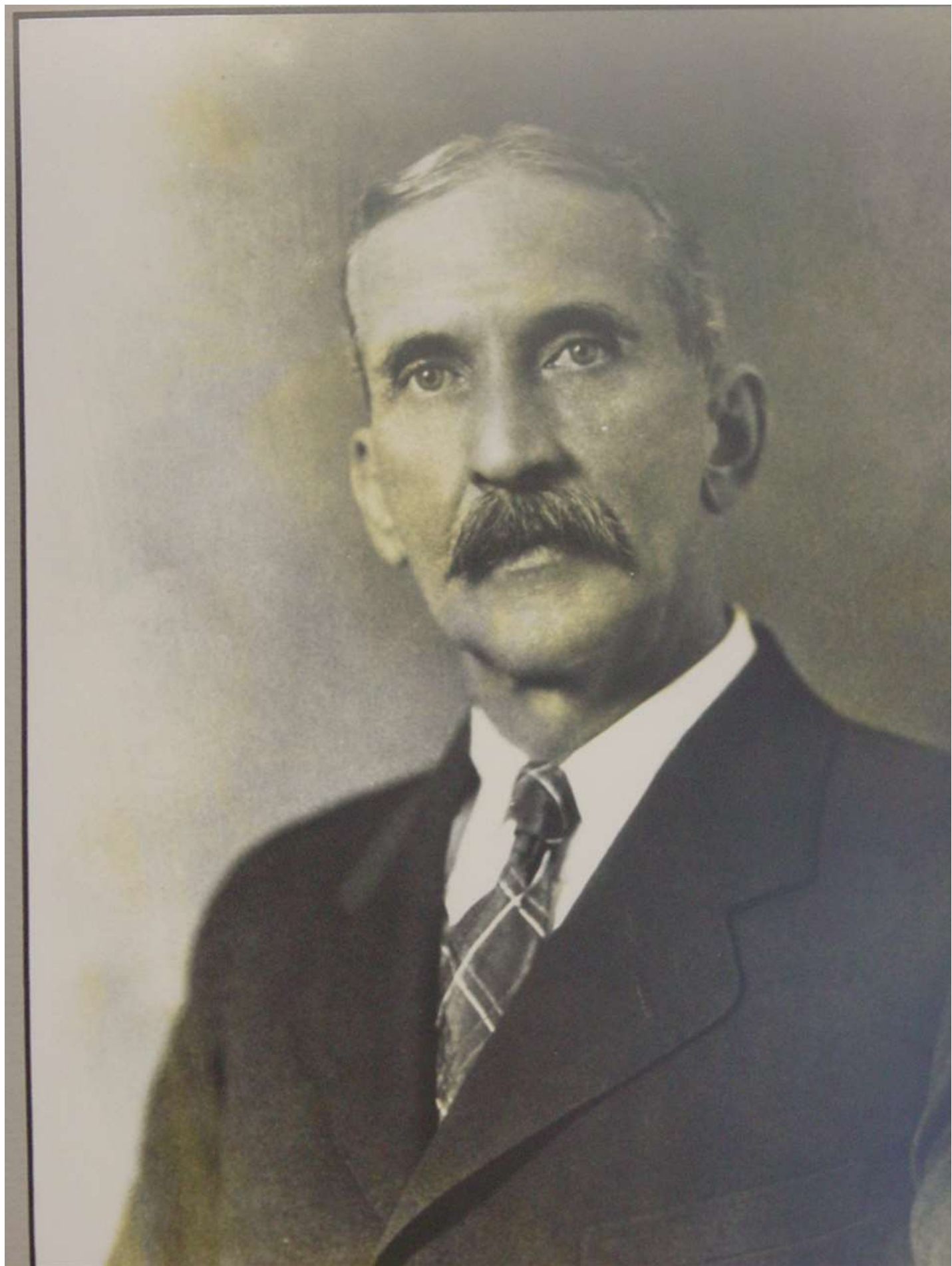
District 3: Crewsville, Popash, Zolfo, Gardner, Sweetwater, Limestone & Lily area—H.K. Still

The three men then held an election and determined that S.B. Hogan would become the Chairman of the Board.

W.R. Gramling, Superintendent of PBI was also present and served as the secretary as provided by law.

During the meeting held on May 20, 1921, the annual salary for the Superintendent would be \$2,400; with

a \$25 travel expense. His assistant would be paid \$1,200 annually.



W.R. Gramling
Superintendent of PBI
Original photograph hangs in the lobby of the
District Offices
No Photographer Specified

A meeting was held on June 6, 1921, in DeSoto County PBI to determine business operation responsibilities and also to request the State Auditor to audit the books of Desoto. In addition, they also determined the valuation of the assessable properties for each of the counties using the 1920 Tax Roll.

The following day, June 7, 1921, the board met to authorize borrowing \$350 for teacher's salaries which was obtained through the Special Tax Fund.

It was voted the number of teachers per school would be decided based on enrollment numbers.

- **12-40 students constitutes 1 teacher**
- **40-75 students constitutes 2 teachers**
- **75-110 students constitutes 4 teachers**
- **No new school if enrollment was less than 15 pupils**

Transportation for students was capped at no more than .20 cents a day per pupil for all grammar children living 3 miles or more from the nearest school when Special Tax School District funds were available. On July 5, 1921, the Board retained an attorney, L. Grady Burton, for legal counsel.

Oak Park School, Wauchula 1925



Source: Hillsborough Library, Digital Collection,
Photography by Burgert Brothers
1925

A New High School 1926

In spite of the three unit complex being completed, the school district still experienced overcrowded conditions. Once again, the School Board had to bond for a new building in the amount of \$50,000. The school would be located in Pouncy's Subdivision about three blocks south of Main Street. Lots for the school were purchased from W.L. Warren for \$5,000. (Board Minutes, Vol 1, page 104)

The new two story High School was to be built by Paber Construction and designed by H.G. Little, a Wauchula architect. The exterior would be constructed with red brick and stone. The school contained sixteen classrooms with a large auditorium, office rooms, library, laboratories, and a clinic. The cost was \$50,000. The new building could hold 400 students. The new school was completed in the spring of 1926.

Principal of the school was Sam W. McInnis.



As you entered the front door, the principal's office was to the right... there was a long hall running east and west; at the end of each hall there was an exit and a flight of stairs leading to the second floor; as you entered and crossed the hall on the first floor, there was a large auditorium and library; the classrooms faced this hall on both floors with the home economics classroom to your left as you entered, and the chemistry laboratory was on the second floor.

Source: Touch of Classes, Project Graduation 1996

The Great Depression in the 1930's

In the Depression Era, Hardee Schools were referred to as the "Pay Schools." Education was greatly affected during this bleak period in history. The Board of Public Instruction was forced to require a tuition fee to be paid for each student to attend public school.

There was no money to pay teacher salaries, purchase books or maintain supplies for the classroom. Money was scarce for many families, so grandparents and other family members would assist in the tuition fees. In many cases, children would have to drop out of school because their parents couldn't afford to pay. Teachers were paid in script; which was a piece of paper stating that the BPI would issue pay, as soon as monies became available. However, this could be a long period of time and teachers needed money to live. In many instances, teachers would opt for taking 10 cents on the dollar, so they could buy necessary items at the local grocery store.

Consolidation/ Closing of Rural Schools

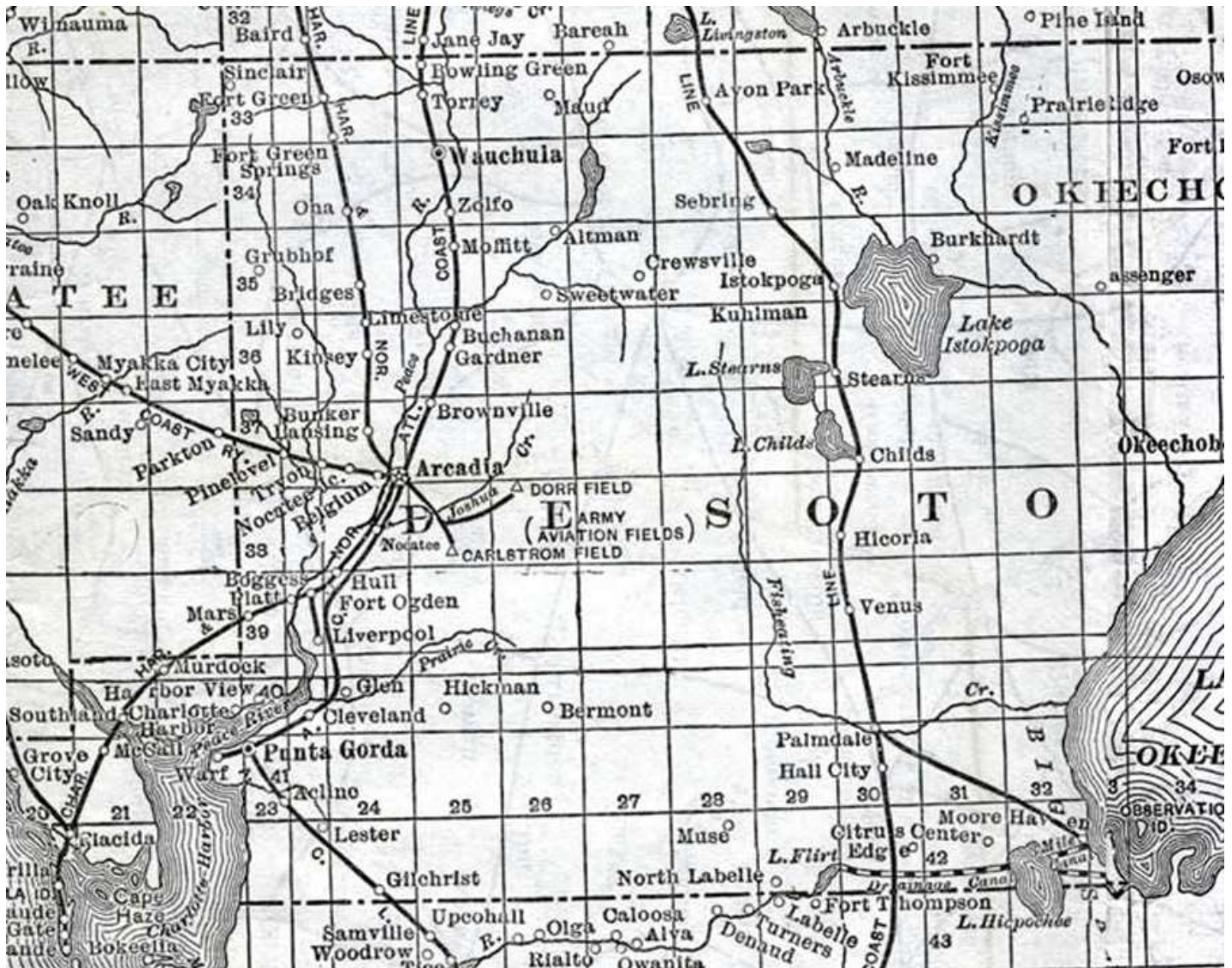
Between 1930-1940 era, many schools that had served as the strawberry and cucumber schools were closed in order to consolidate. There were as many as 33 schools in various communities throughout our District. They were Altman, Bowling Green, Bridges, Buchanan, Castalia, Center Hill, College

Hill, Crewsville, Fish Branch, Ft. Green, Gardner, Harrison City, Holzendorf, Lake Branch, Lemon Grove, Lilly Branch, Limestone, Live Oak, Maud(e), Oak Grove, Ona Station, Parnell, Pine Dale, Popash, Prospect, Scott, Spring Hill, Sweetwater, Torrey, Tura, Vandolah, Wauchula and Zolfo Springs. These schools can be verified as being in existence because the District has Teacher Attendance Rosters for each of these schools. Please note that actual establishments are only recorded as we learn more about these schools. Our records vary due to the time frame involved. Record keeping was simplified in these early years. Inclusive dates may not be 100% accurate. Regardless, there were many strides being made to ensure education for all children in the rural areas.

Consolidation occurred as roads improved making travel easier for students to get to and from school. Major highways that were added also contributed to the closing of many schools and leaving only the more centralized schools in the county open. The Board brought the recommendation from the State Department of Education to the table for consideration at their March 21, 1949, meeting. The recommendation was for the School Board to consolidate to three permanent school centers: Zolfo Springs, Bowling Green and Wauchula. The Board unanimously voted to accept the state's proposal. (Board Minutes Vol:2 page 244)

In addition, the railroad also played an important role in determining the three centers. The North Atlantic Coast Railroad ran through the cities and communities that would later become Hardee County: Bowling Green, Torrey, Wauchula, Zolfo, Moffitt, Buchanan and Gardner.

The map below, shows the routes of the railroad.



1920 Map, Source: fcit.usf.edu

Shown on this map are: Altman, Bowling Green, Bridges, Buchanan, Crewsville, Ft Green, Gardner, Grubhof, Kinsley, Lily, Limestone, Maud(e), Moffitt, Ona, Sinclair, Sweetwater, Torrey, Wauchula and Zolfo.

1933 Name Changed to Wauchula High School

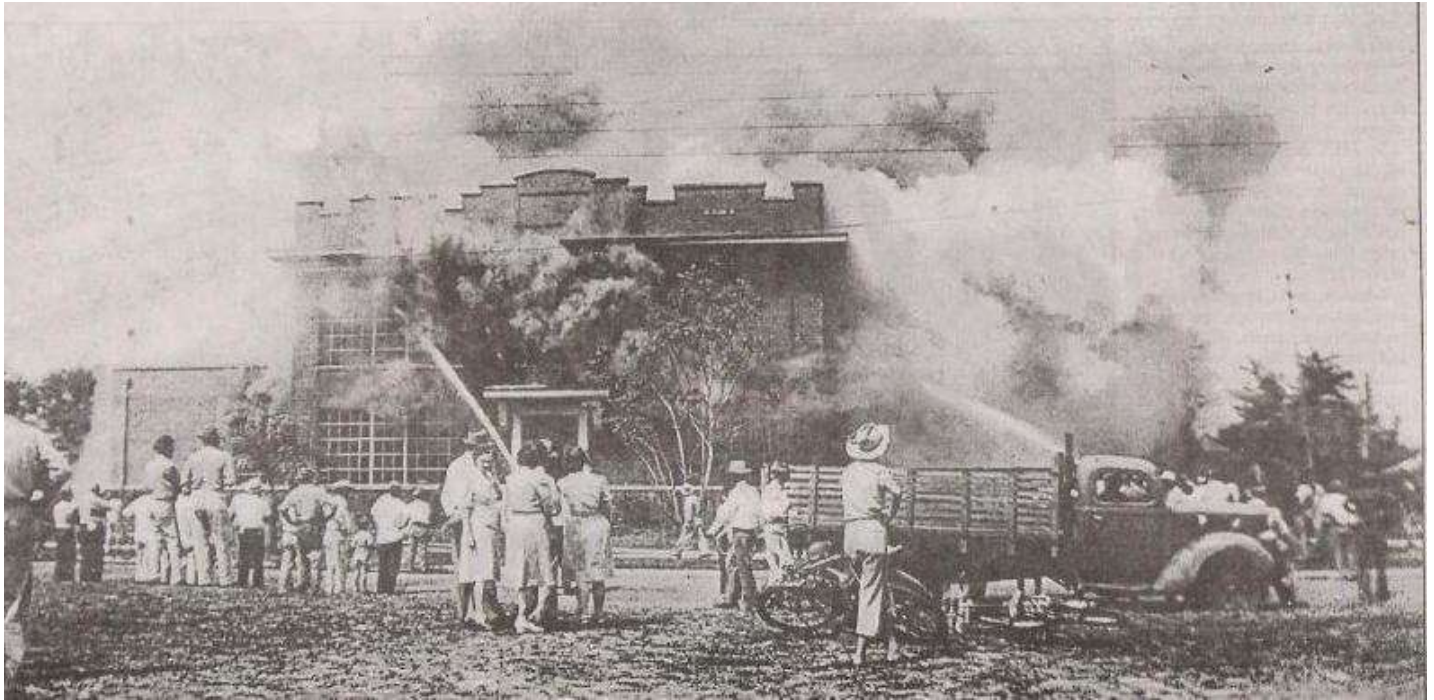
On August 29, 1933, the Wauchula High School was renamed to Hardee County High School by the Board of Public Instruction. (Board Minutes, Volume 1, Page 276)

1945 Fire Claims the Hardee County High School

At 10:40 A.M. on April 27, 1945, the alarm sounded for the local fire department to respond to a blaze at the southeast corner of Bay Street and Florida Avenue. It was the High School! The arrival at the scene and seeing that the fire team couldn't handle the blaze on their own, Chief Peoples requested help from neighboring fire stations in Ft. Meade, Avon Park and Arcadia.

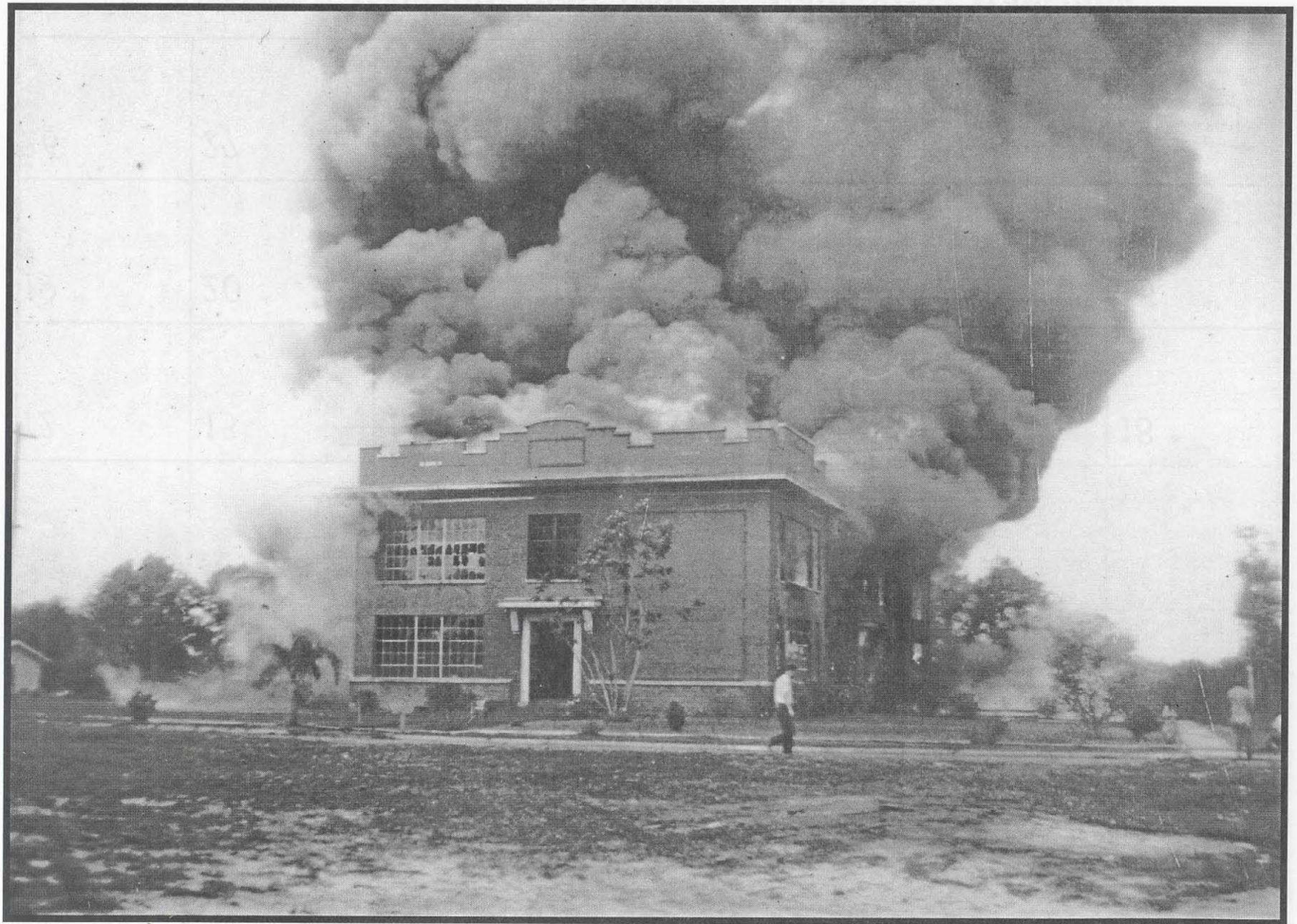
In spite of their efforts, the heat became so unbearable that they had to retreat. The building burned to the ground leaving nothing but the walls standing.

All records of students who graduated since 1925 were lost in the fire. The loss of the building, equipment and contents was estimated at \$150,000. There was nothing left to salvage.



Source:

CrackerBarrel, Rootsweb.com



Wauchula High School (1945)

Source:

Main Street 2006 Calendar

The Board being in session, at the time of the fire, adjourned to offer assistance. In the afternoon of that same day, they reconvened to determine how they would continue the high school for the 1945-46 school term. Quick action by the board was evident when they passed a resolution to secure permission from the Zolfo Springs Trustees to house the county high school in the Zolfo school building.

Superintendent T.E. Blackburn, Board Chairman C.A. Best and Member English made a trip to Tallahassee where they met with Representative Taylor. In the conference with Representative Taylor, they made their plead for financial assistance, in order to secure books, Home Economics equipment, library books, typewriters, desks and other needs.

Upon their return at the May 4, 1945, Special Meeting they reported that they had been successful in acquiring financial aid.(Board Minutes Vol:2, Pages 121-122)

Temporary Location for High School Students

The aftermath of the fire, brought on a whole new meaning to opening day. The Board and Trustees were faced with many obstacles. Additional preparation was required, in order, for the education of Wauchula High School students to continue. The decision for the school to convene would be on May 24th. Starting time would be at 9:45 A.M.



Group of students at Zolfo Springs School. Students attended for a year after high school burned down — 1945. Jimmy Moye, Louis Makowski, Freddie Timmerman, Pete Norris, Clarence Lee, Jimmie Lanier, Marvin Herndon, Margaret Himrod, Gwen Knight, Betty Ruth Polk.

Source: A Touch of Classes, Project Graduation 1996

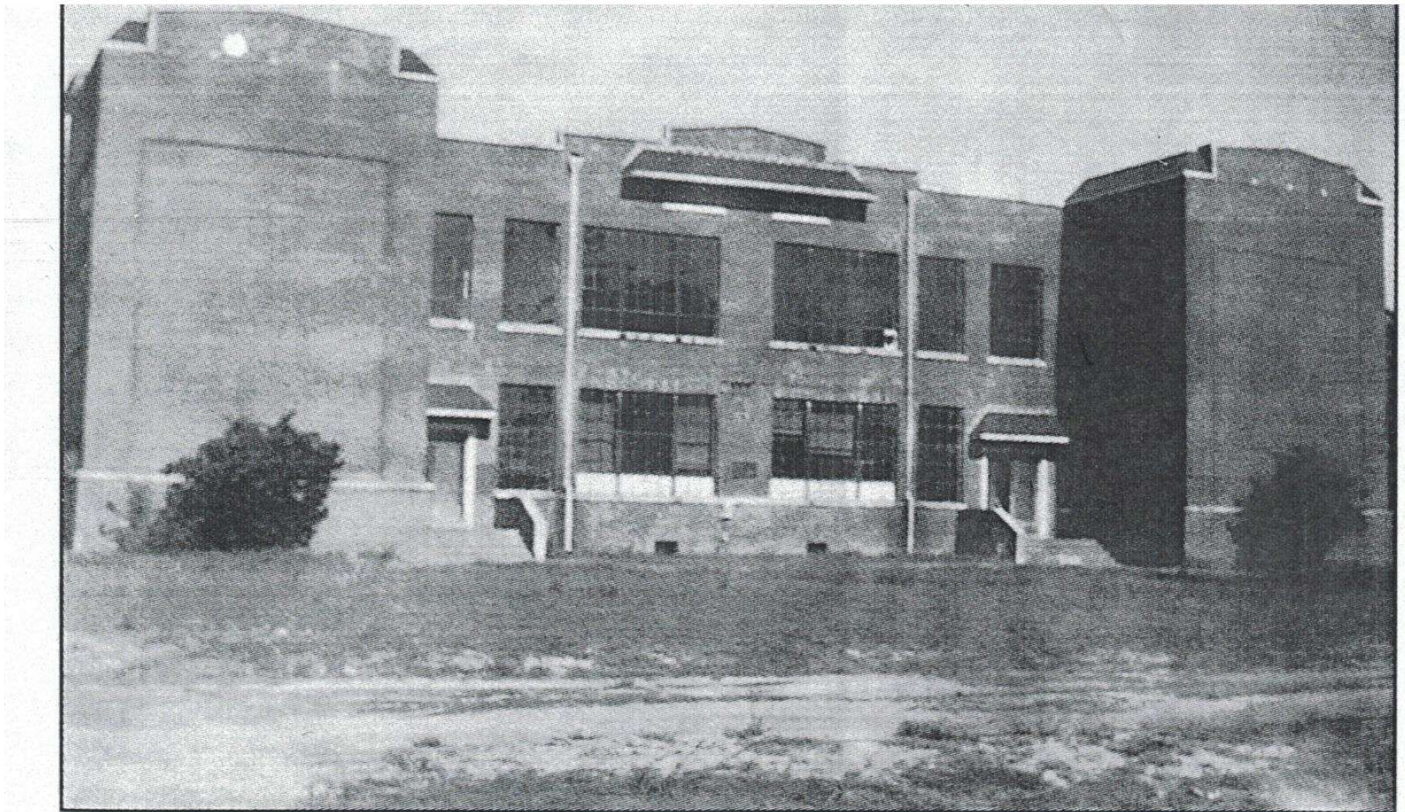
A plea by Superintendent T.E. Blackburn was made to the community for donations.

“We sustained a very heavy loss in building, books, furnishings and other equipment. The loss cannot be easily replaced. Much of it is not on the market. We are a small county, and there is a great need of unity, unity and more unity. We need your help and your children need the help of all together least we fail them in providing the essentials for an adequate school system.”

High School principal, Prichard also made requests for much needed items. Additional concerns and adjustments had to be made to accommodate sanitation issues, parking, lunches and providing adequate water supply at the Zolfo Springs School. Transportation of students was another issue that needed to be addressed. It was decided that for the 1945-46 school term all high school students were to be picked up at three major locations at 9:00 A.M.

1. All high school students living west of 7th Avenue would wait for their bus at the High School ground.
2. All high school students living east of 7th Avenue will wait at the Bay Street Service Station.
3. All high school students living north of Main Street would meet at the elementary school.

Text books were another issue along with the need of stocking a library. The Principal made a request to the public to donate any books that private citizens may have. Any donation of books would be accepted with open arms.



*Old Zolfo Springs School attended
when high school burned down — 1945.*

Source:
Touch of Classes
1996 Project Graduation

Re-Establishing Credits

All permanent records of students were lost in the fire in the spring of 1945. Therefore, Mr. Jack Pritchard, Principal of Hardee County High School, responded to requests from other schools and universities explaining that students were responsible for re-establishing their credits for graduation.

HARDEE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

✂

WAUCHULA, FLORIDA

October 3, 1945

Registrar
Forest Lake Academy
Maitland, Florida

Dear Sir:

The Hardee County High School burned last spring and all permanent records were lost. Many of our former students have re-established credit but ~~_____~~ has failed to do so to date.

Please have the enclosed blank filled in by the student and returned immediately to us for verification.

Yours very truly,

Jack B. Prichard
Jack B. Prichard, *Principal*

JBP:sd
Encl.

A letter was written on October 3, 1945. There was also an enclosure for the purpose of listing courses taken for each of the respective four years: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior years. Most of the re-collections of courses taken were determined by the word of the student.

The Hardee County High School is Rebuilt

It was the 20th of June in 1945; when the Architect L. Alex Hutton appeared before the Board to submit the application for approval which included blue prints and specifications. Funds would be directed under the Bureau of Community Facilities to build a new high school. The Wauchula Trustees presented the proposed site for construction on December 27, 1945. It was a 10 acre track located next to the west side of the old highway known as the Southerland Estate. The cost was \$6,000.

In order for the PBI to have funding to build the new county high school, a county referendum on legislative issues had to be settled for the use of Race Track Funds. An Election was to be held on February 12, 1946, to determine the funding of the high school. Trustees and the Board decided to request that the Board of County Commissioners set aside \$5,000 annually to be matched by the Trustees for 15 years. The monies would come from Race Track Funds, over the 15 years that would provide for \$150,000. The completion cost would be as high as \$300,000 which would include 10-12 classrooms, study halls, furnishings and a auditorium. The monies for the gymnasium would be generated through the American Legion who agreed to take on the fund raising for this project. Architect Elliott and Fletcher and Associates were responsible for the specifications. A building committee was established to oversee the project. Members of the committee were: R.A. Taylor, A.B. Pearce, Evan Jones, Woodrow Nicholson, L.W. Bostick and Albert Lane. On April 20, 1948, the Board awarded the construction bid from C.A. Fielland, Inc. of Tampa.

(Board Minutes, Vol:2, Page 220-221)

The cost would be: \$320, 619.00

Plumbing: \$14,082.50

Roy A. Barnett & Sons

Gym foundation \$16,858.00

& concrete floor

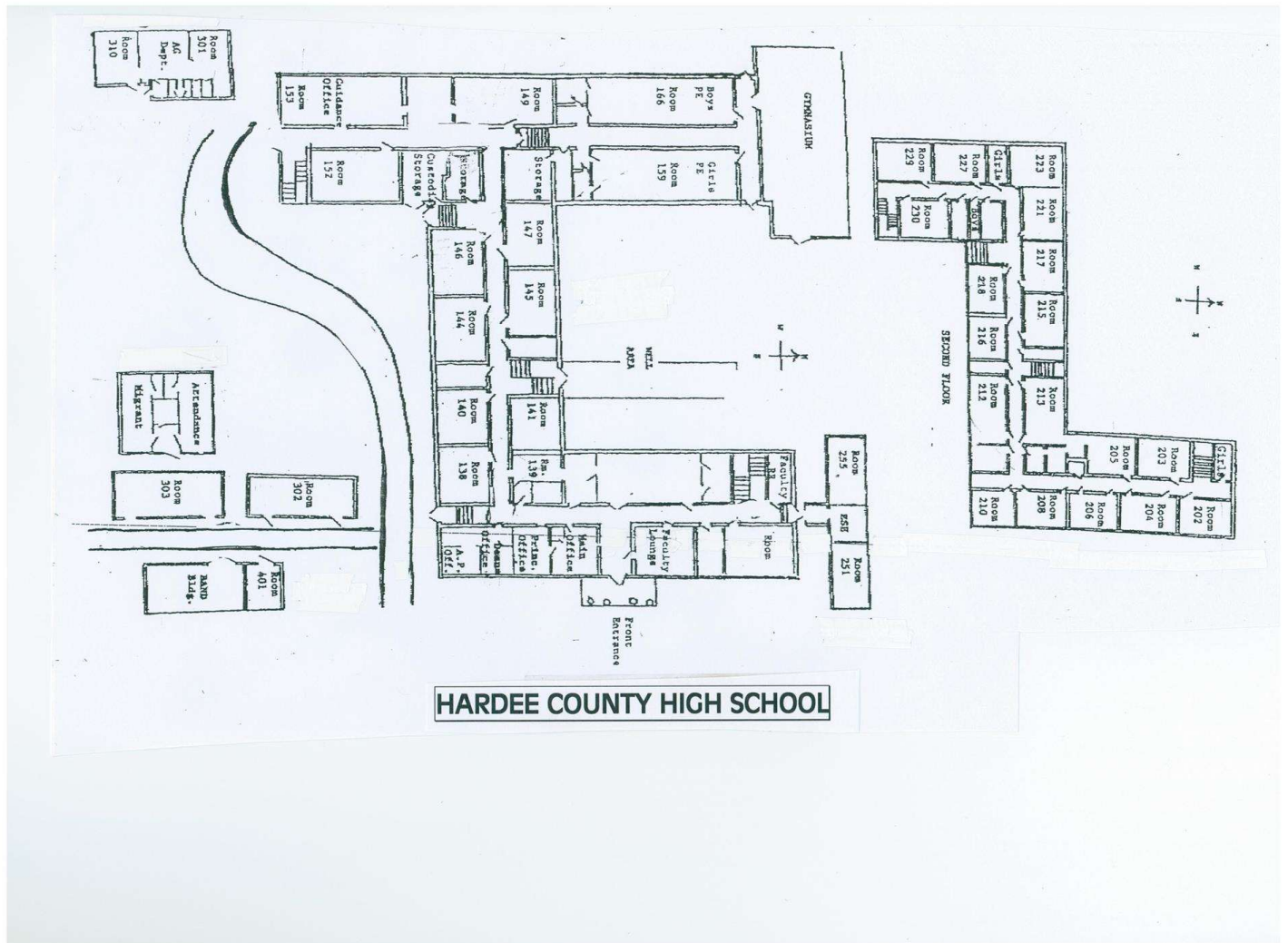


Source: Crackel Barrel, Rootsweb.com

Dedication Ceremony of the New Hardee County High School

A dedication committee for the opening of the school consisted of Mr. Joel Evers and Mr. H.F. Johnson. They were given the direction from the Board that the ceremony would be on August 31, 1949. The dedication ceremony was held in the afternoon with an estimated crowd of 3,000.

The Hardee County Teacher's Association greeted guests and conducted tours throughout the new complex.



The new school opened for students on September 12, 1949, with 444 students in attendance. Teachers at opening day were: Joel Evers, principal, Isabel F. Akins, E.E. Bagwell, Katherine Bostick, Golda Carlton, Frances Causey, Paul Creech, Ralph Fritz, R.G. Manley, V.G. Matherly, Sara McInnis, Thelma Cole Miller, Alice T. Pearce, C.A. Platt, Mattie Mae Saunders, Norma Shackelford, Louise Southerland, Mary Louise Van Natta, Maude Wilkinson and Lorraine Young.



Flag Pole in front of Hardee County High School



This beautiful painting hangs in the foyer of the Old HHS on Florida Avenue. The artist for the painting is Dorothy Sherman Leech. Currently, there is no information as to how the painting was aquired.



Dedication Plaque Hangs in Foyer of the Hardee County High School .According to the plaque, the school was erected in 1958



3038

6303#
Dorothy Sherman Leech

1949-1950 School Year

The Board of Public Instruction ruled that the insignia for the Hardee County High School would be "H" instead of the "W" for Wildcats.

(Board Minutes Volume 2, page 244)

Lillian R. Brown School Built in 1950

The school was first named Wauchula Junior High School and taught students in the first grade through the eighth. Plans for construction of the new school first began when board members met on May 20, 1950, to accept the bid from Himrod and Bostick for \$17,988. On September 8, 1950, the dedication ceremony was held with the attendance of two-hundred people. The ceremony consisted of the Superintendent of H.B. Dominick welcoming the public with the Principal, Mrs. L.R. Brown, of the school responding. Guest speaker for the event was D.E. Williams, Superintendent of Education, State of Florida, Department of Education.