

The LHS Newsletter Archive

BALD EAGLE

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BASD



EAGLE

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LECOMPTON, KANSAS

WINTER 1992



THE LECOMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

Lecompton High School was organized in 1903 at the regular District #36 meeting, as a direct result of the closing of Lane University. Certain United Brethren College officials did not think Lecompton was large enough, or wealthy enough, to support a College and it was consistently in debt, therefore they thought it should move to a larger area. Mr. F.M. Rynerson, of Seattle, Washington, offered Lane \$50,000 and a new building, if they would stay where they were. This was to be in shares of the Fidelity Mining and Milling Co. However, Holton, Kansas officials offered the College \$100,000 if they would locate there, so the College Trustees voted to do so. Lane had provided a prepara-

tory course which included all the subjects a student needed to enter any Kansas College without having to take lengthy examinations. As a result, Lecompton students would not have the requirements needed to enroll in a College, as there was no organized high school.

In June, 1903, a school meeting was held to discuss the possibility of organizing a local high school, which would include only that area that encompassed the local grade school district. The State Legislature, at its last session (1903) had passed a special law authorizing the Lecompton annual District #36 school meeting

to increase the tax levy to an amount sufficient to cover the cost of a high school as well as a grade school. At that meeting it was enthusiastically passed and the group almost unanimously decided to make the new high school a permanent part of the then-present school system, District #36. This was to last ninety-nine years. For students living within the District, there would be no tuition fee; to those outside of the District, a fee of \$6.00 a year would be charged.

A problem then arose as to a location for the classes, and it was decided to use a room in the second story of the present grade school as the high school "home room", and lease rooms from the Lane University Church, which was now the sole occupant of the building. The students could easily go from one building to the other, as they were just across the street from each other.

When the trustees moved Lane University from Lecompton, the local school District was given much equipment, consisting of a large select cabinet of geographical and astrological and mineral specimens; a large library; a piano and some musical instruments; a \$700 telescope; two large professional microscopes; electrical apparatus; chemical apparatus and chemicals; a skeleton with chart manikens; maps; globes; equipment excelled by no other high school in the state, and equalled by only three or four.

The entire teaching staff of the District was to consist of six instructors; a music course and a commercial course were to be added to the regular course of study. As the local school had nine grades in the regular curriculum, it was planned to add two new classes (sophomore and junior) the present year, and one more (senior) in two years, so the high school would then be a four-year institution. The "so-called" ninth grade was the equivalent of the freshman year of high school, except a Latin course was mandatory. The classes were to be alternated, and the students could choose between the Latin course and the English. The following was the program of subjects:

**August 18, 1905, Lecompton High School
Course of Study**

FRESHMAN

Latin Course
English Composition
Algebra
Latin
Botany

SOPHOMORE

Latin Course
Caesar
English Literature
Algebra
Botany

English Course

English Composition
Algebra
English History
Botany

English Course

English Literature
Algebra
Advanced Arithmetic
Botany

JUNIOR

Latin Course

Cicero
Plane Geometry
Greek and Roman History
English Literature

SENIOR

Latin Course

Virgil
Solid Geometry
Green and Roman History
Physics

English Course

English Literature
Plane Geometry
Greek and Roman History
Psychology

English Course

Physics
Solid Geometry
Greek and Roman History
Psychology

This course of study was the same as the preparatory course in any College, and the graduates could enter any State College of their choice. "Lecompton (according to the July 25, 1909 Lecompton Sun) is a good healthy town, on the mail line of the Santa Fe Railway, not a joint, boot-legger, billiard ball, or any other form of fashionable vice in the town. Religious services are held every Sunday by the United Brethren (Liberal), United Brethren (Radical) And Methodist Episcopal churches."

In 1905, there were five graduates from the high school as follows; Lloyd Day, Beattie Fleenor, Pearl Lewis, Henry Wenrich and Fred Winter.

The 1907 faculty of the grade and high school was composed of J.B. Wilson, Superintendent; Miss Alice Hyatt, Principal of the High School; Mrs. Mattie Blane, Grammer Room; Miss Pearl Lewis, Intermedi-

ate Room; Miss Lenora Caldwell, Primary Room; Miss Myra Spangler, Music.

By 1917 the school population had increased to such an extent, that more room was needed. George Connell, the local newsman, printed a communication from a loccal man, C.W. Sehon, concerning whether the School District should meet the needs by purchasing the Lane Church building or erect a new building. He had met with the church officials and ascertained that they were willing to sell, so it could be used as a school or community meeting place where the Fourth of July or Annual Fall Festival could be held. Connell asked the public to contact him or Sehon and indicate their choices. Then in a week a town meeting would be called and a decision made. The building could be purchased for \$8,000. However, no action was taken.

The State Legislature had passed a law that year that provided that in those counties not operating under the Barnes Law, that the County Commissioners should make a levy of four dollars per month per pupil for every common school graduate who was living in a District not maintaining a high school who wished to attend high school, and requested the county to pay the tuition. Many pupils were eligible, twenty-three in the Lecompton area alone. The law did not increase the taxes of the high school Districts, but allotted the levy to the home District of the pupil outside the high school District. The increased population would overburden the facilities in use in Lecompton and require more room.

Lecompton High School had several extra-curricular activities that added to its popularity; a male chorus of 18 members, a female chorus of 11, and football, basketball and baseball teams. The football team did very well in the fall of 1917 with the following members: John Walters, center; Elmer Shirley, right guard; John Richards, right guard; Harvey Glenn, left tackle; Herman Banks, right tackle; Jack Hill, left end; Fred Davidson, right end; Fred Burton, quaterback; Phil Sehon (Capt.) right half; Bill Richards, left half; Don Stark, fullback; Winter Ingham, Ted Baughman, Amos Geelan, and Bert McRae, substitutes. October 4, they played Wellsville and won 14-0, October 10 they played Perry and won 12-0. The games were clean and devoid of wrangling. Anyone who "cussed" was imme-

diatey thrown out of the game. Both teams resorted to the "forward pass". The team uniforms were white shirts and light blue football pants. During and after a game, their clothes were to them, repulsively dirty, so after their fourth game they got together and decided on black and orange (gold) for their colors and athletic clothing, as they did not show the dirt as badly. The night of the Perry game, the team and school had a parade and bonfire, after which the High School girls gave them an oyster supper at the home of E.J. Hill.

In 1918, it became obvious that a larger School District base was needed. The attendance had climbed to forty-five pupils, and twenty-two were from five adjacent Districts whose tuition was \$4.00 per month or thirty-six dollars a year, the cost of instruction was about \$5.75 per month per pupil. In some previous years the cost per pupil for tuition had been about \$2.00 per month. With the need of higher teacher salaries, additional need for more rooms and equipment in order to meet State requirements to remain accredited, the increased cost would be met by Lecompton alone without any help from those outside the local District who had benefitted from the high school, and would continue to do so. The local District was now paying 8 mills on the dollar for taxation for the school comprised of Districts 24, 36, 69, 19, and 70, which if united would have a high enough valuation, with a levy of only 3 mills, to maintain a first class school. Some of those people that were included wanted to organize a rural high school at Big Springs, as all Districts would be near the "Fort to Fort" highway (Hwy. 40) an all weather road. However, it was ascertained that that area would not have a valuation large enough to operate on a 4 mill levy as required by law. The group voted then on whether a rural high school was wanted, and it was almost unanimous for such a school, but no further action was taken.

On Thursday, October 23, 1919, the pupils in the stone grade school building smelled smoke. The furnace was prone to do that, so the 4th, 5th, asnd 6th grade teacher, Clarence Smith, picked up his large geography book and put it on the furnace register. The smoke became worse and in a few minutes, Mr. Willaims, the Principal, jerked open the door, and in a stern voice said, "Stand, pass"! The students all moved rapidly out of the room, but one girl came back. She had worn her

new black coat that morning and was not about to let it burn. She grabbed her coat and ran from the room, just as the floor fell in. The cellar (basement) contained several wagon loads of kindling, of which much of it was shingles to be used for starting a fire in the wood furnace. Earlier in the day, some pupil had been sent to the furnace room with a waste basket of paper. It was later thought some of it fell out of the furnace and ignited the other paper or kindling, or there was a defective furnace pipe, or even a small explosion, as the furnace was "tempermental".

The smoke was so thick and the fire moved so fast that the only things saved from the building were the Victrola, six boxes of chalk, a water cooler, and a few attendance records. Later, someone fell over the water cooler and broke it. The building had only been used from the Fall of 1899 to the Fall of 1919. The estimated loss was \$15,000 with \$4,500 insurance.

The following Monday, the Lane United Brethren church agreed to rent the school four more rooms for the rest of the school year for \$160. The Board went to Topeka on Tuesday and bought new equipment; stoves, books, maps, globes and desks. They also rented rooms in Constitution Hall, Hotel Windsor, the stone warehouse, and former Presbyterian church at various times.

A meeting concerning the Rural High School was called on Thursday, to select a committee to go to the County Superintendent to consult with him about boundaries, valuations and how to draw up petitions for a High School Bond Election, for a District that would take in all of Lecompton, Glenn, most of Greenwood Valley, Starr, part of Jones, Winter and Crowder. The valuation would be over two and one-half million dollars. They wanted to issue \$40,000 in bonds that would run for 15 years and draw 5 mills interest. The Santa Fe railroad would bear about 35% of the cost. Petitions for that proposed election were put in the hands of M.R. Winter and Charles Wells - Winter and Crowder; Charles Migliario - Starr and Jones; Boyd Scott - Glenn and Greenwood Valley; O.E. Baughman and Clara Nace - Lecompton. They were successful in getting about 60% of the voters to sign the petitions.

The County Commissioners passed favorably on the proposed bond issue. On February 20, 1920, a

bond issue of \$10,000 was passed - the rest of the proposed \$40,000 to be taken up later. There had been rumors that the mill levy would be as high as 20 mills, but County Superintendent O.J. Lane sent a letter to the Lecompton Sun that stated that it could not be above 4 mills and 5 only if passed on by the State Tax Commission. So the rumor was quieted.

Lecompton now faced plans for a new Grade School building as well as their part in the High School building. The High School asked the church to sell them the church building they were using, as they were contemplating waiting a year or two to build a new High School or to remodel the church building they were now occupying. The church agreed to the sale and plans went forward to remodel it, as the bond market was at its lowest. It was just after World War I and there was an inability to obtain needed materials and labor for the new building. The Board made plans to start making over the chapel into a gymnasium and auditorium. They had recently purchased domestic science and laboratory equipment, so the school was moving forward. They had the help of B.F. Lewis, a former Lecompton resident, and now in the State Superintendent's office. Myrtle Gunselman, the Principal, established a course of study comprised of sewing, cooking, agriculture, commercial arithmetic, science, English I, II, IV, modern history, algebra, geometry and physics, which met all State requirements. There were now two separate Districts, Lecompton Grade School and Lecompton Rural High School, so there were two different Boards.

A bond election was held July 1, 1920 to vote \$12,000 in bonds to build a school house to replace the one that had burned. This was the project of just District #36 and for the Grade School only. It carried 62-1. Work on the building started immediately and was dedicated February 25, 1921. It was remarkable because it had four classrooms, an office, electric lights, a large meeting room, running water, two bathrooms, and a furnace.

The High School had increased its population over the years and in 1922 had 47 students, 19 of which were not residents of the town, the football team was very active. Out of eight games played they had won 4, lost 3 and tied one. A girls basketball team had been organized and was having a good season; they played

Berryton and won 34-7. The boys played the same evening and won 64-10. The school also organized a baseball team for Spring play. The school was getting involved in athletic activities, but did not neglect the boys' and girls' glee clubs. They presented a program of carols at Christmas time, and each year an operetta which was the pride of the town. After Christmas vacation the students came back to find electric lights in the study hall, and light switches in each room. There was also a small shed that would accomodate five horses, that had been built north of the school house. As many as 10 to 12 students were driving or riding horses to school. The shed was near the well so the horses could be easily watered. Some students rented rooms from local people and stayed in town during the week.

In 1925, the old tennis court was restored and the boys and faculty cleaned up the area north of the school for a ball field. They also set posts and fixed a backstop to protect the building. The basement of the school had been renovated into a carpenter shop and classrooms. The faculty and students had also prepared scenery so that the former chapel could be redecorated and made into a stage for plays, etc. It was while they were putting up these that Billy Glenn, who was working with two others up in the attic, stepped between the rafters, and went through the ceiling. Fortunately, one leg hooked on a rafter so he didn't fall the 30 feet to the stage, and was rescued by the other workers.

By late 1926, the District thought the building was deteriorating and too difficult to modernize, and should be replaced. They had voted for the \$40,000 bond issue in 1920, which they had not used. They had misplaced the records concerning it, so the State Legislature passed a bill that would legalize that issue, and make it possible to avoid another bond election, but validated the previous one. A plan for the school was made and on July 29, 1927 a contract for the chosen blue print was let to H.A. Grabendyke of Ottawa for \$30,000. Heating, plumbing, and wiring were on separate contracts for just over \$6,000. It was to be south of the old rock church building, to be built of brick, a tile roof, two stories high, fireproof, with a basement. On August 4, 1927 the first dirt was removed and the work went ahead rapidly, but was shut down occasionally due to zero weather.

The last class that graduated from the stone church building was in May, 1927. The Class had fourteen members: Roy Armstrong, Mabel Bertschinger, Harley Dark, Eldred Day, Grace Gray, Wayne Hall, Almeda Kettering, Edgar Lancaster, Paul Maust, Kenneth Matney, Faye McClanahan, Frank Smith, Joe Smith and Frank Walter.

It had been hoped that the new school would be completed by mid-semester, but it was not dedicated until February 3, 1928. The auditorium would seat 320 people; it was full, there were people standing in the aisles, in the halls, and in the yard. The dedication included music by the girls' glee club, a short play, "Victory Without Labor", addresses by Supt. O.J. Lane, Gene Berk, Senator Johnson, and Representative George W. Plummer. Others who made short talk were Boyd Scott, F.H.Nace, Fred Moore, George McCarty and Frank Kerns. J.M.Taylor presided at the meeting. After the program, everyone had a good time looking through the building. The halls and stairs were lovely terrazzo, there were seven well-lighted classrooms, a large study hall, an office, library, a splendid gymnasium, two dressing rooms, two bathrooms, a fine heating system and plumbing. It was so impressive that it was referred to as "Lecompton's Pride" and remained so until it was no longer used.

In 1955 the gym did not meet the basketball specifications, so a large addition was made on the north side of the building. It included a larger basketball court, two large restrooms and dressing rooms, and an entry. It also provided bleachers that could accomodate a much larger crowd. This added to the charm and usefulness of the building. In 1992, it is still being used by the local schools and community for the Alumni Banquet, Historical Society dinner groups, exercise area for the elderly, and a place for local teams to play basketball.

The athletic teams were primarily successful over the years, both the boys and the girls. One game played for fun only, was the girls' basketball team against the boys. The boys wore rubber boots, sunbonnets, and dresses. The large crowd immensely enjoyed the game, and the spirit of levity which animated both players and referees.

The first graduation exercises that were held in the new building occurred May 19, 1928. Margaret Hill McCarter, a noted Kansas author, delivered the address and many said it was the best they'd ever had. J.M.Taylor presented diplomas to Romanus DeKat, Billie Glenn, Raymond Foree, Albert Hamlin, Elsie Lasswell, Robert McClanahan, Mary McRae, Raymond Sanford, Bill Schroyer, Ruth Shaffer, Sara Slavens, Hazel Taylor and Mary Agnes Walter.

The High School had been organized in 1902 and had its first graduates in 1905, a Class of five members. High School at that time was not considered important to the work force, so after the 8th grade many students went no further, but worked in local business. Gradually it became necessary to have some business or shop training and High School became essential. The athletic activities were instrumental in keeping up with the enthusiasm for the school, and the whole community attended football, basketball and baseball games each year. One or the other sport was very successful as far as winning was concerned, and the players gave the games all they had, and carried that over into their adult lives. The students who took the business courses, especially the girls, could graduate and immediately find work. Lecompton lost the County Fair, but kept the High School as a result of their effort.

In 1964 the State Superintendent of Education notified the School Districts that they had to meet two out of three qualifications, 400 students, a certain evaluation, or so many square miles, or they had to unify with another School District until they did. The idea of having just one School District in all of Douglas County was suggested, but did not appeal to the smaller schools. Lecompton, as it was, did not qualify, so some members of the High School and Grade School Boards with the help of professionals, worked out a plan that would make them eligible in two of the three areas. They had petitions and maps made that could be taken through the District for the residents to sign. Bill Leslie, Bob Norwood, Herman Banks, Pete Bahnmaier and Frank Walter took out the petitions and over 60% of the people involved, signed. The petitions were then taken to the State Superintendent of Schools, who did not believe that the Kansas Power and Light should be in the new proposed District. This cut down the valuation, then

two people on one side of the District withdrew their land, which cut the area so that neither the size or valuation were large enough. The School District and the School Board appealed to both the Legislature and State Superintendent for help, making them aware of the success of the school and the students.

In the 1969-1970 school year, the football team was outstanding. The team played Mayetta, Dover, Meriden, Paxico, Linwood, Harveyville, Quenemo and Greeley, winning all games with a combined score of 483-72. They went to the play-offs at Russell, but lost to Lucas due to the "penetration rule". The basketball teams were also successful. The first team took first in the District with a record of 14 games won and 7 lost. The "B" team was the Eastern Central League champs with a 17-1 record. They were also winners in track and baseball.

The Lecompton students were fortunate to have had many excellent instructors as Ship Winter, Ora Smith, Mattie Caldwell and Roy Knapp. In later years, Coach Bill Nelson comes to mind as one who always went the extra mile for his students in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities such as sports, plays and "sneak trips"; Mrs. Duckett for writing the Alma Mater; Vernon Hayes, who was respected as a winning coach and government and history teacher, and R.R.Robinson, who helped the school through the trauma of having to give up the School District.

Despite their appeals, the State Superintendent was adamant, the school had to make a change. So in the Fall of 1970, Lecompton chose to unite with the Perry, Kansas School District. The Spring 1970 graduation was to be Lecompton High School's last and its graduates were Mike Bahnmaier, Susan Bean, James Boose, Loretta Brouhard, Ilona Delge, Steve Goodrick, Thelma Henning, Bernard Herman, Terry Hope, Bruce Inloes, Marvin Kellum, Wanda Miller, Ken Norwood, Carl Pasley, Gary Powell, Debbie Roberts, Donald Rothwell, Betty Smith, Vicki Stroda, Charlene Walter and Joe Yost.

The building was used by the 6th, 7th and 8th grades until 1976 when they too were moved to Perry. The building then remained vacant until 1989 when it was sold to the Northeast Kansas Education Service

Center, who services School Districts with various programs. The Regional District concept supports schools who wish to maintain their local control while providing the best and latest education to their students, so the building is still serving the community. If the organization no longer wants the building, it is to be sold back to the City of Lecompton for the fee of \$1.

The Lecompton Alma Mater

Hail to Lecompton, hats off to you.
Ever you'll find us, loyal and true.

Firm and undaunted, always we'll be.
Here's to the school we love, here's a toast to thee.

L-E-C-O-M-P-T-O-N

That's the way to spell it - Here's the way to yell it...
Lecompton!!!

References:

Lecompton Sun, May 15, June 26, 1903; July 25, 1905; November 13, 1908; May 24, July 19, October 17, August 23, 1917; May 23, September 12, 1918; October 23, November 20, 1919; January 8, January 22, February 5, February 26, March 18, April 1, April 8, April 15, April 29, June 17, June 24, July 1, December 2, 1920; February 24, 1921; September 13, 1923; January 11, January 17, 1924; April 16, 1925; March 17, July 21, July 28, August 4, October 27, November 10, 1927; February 2, April 19, May 10, May 19, 1928.
Lawrence Journal-World, January 30, September 9, 1964; January 8, October 30, 1965.
Kansas City Times, December 31, 1964.
Topeka Capital, December 30, 1964.
Topeka State Journal, May 16, 1976.

-- BACK AFTER 14 YEARS --

In the 1970s as the Lecompton Historical Society began to become an important reality in the community, THE BALD EAGLE was born. Dale Gregg was President then and Chuck Wright was Chairman of the Board. His son, Douglas, a young Topeka lawyer, drew up incorporation papers for the Society. To inform the community about what the Society was doing, the need for a newsletter became apparent. Since he had a professional advertising and printing background, the first issues were edited and produced by Chuck, whose great grandfather, David Thomas Mitchell was on the first Board of Trustees of Lane University.

Because of his work, Chuck asked to be relieved so Howard and Ellen Duncan agreed to take the publication over, and for the past 14 years they have done an outstanding job with it. Ellen's expertise in the art and illustration field is well-known in Lecompton, and she has "spiced" up the publication with her artistic talents. Howard did an outstanding job of typesetting for the publication, but he has now asked to have someone else be the "typesetter". So to "pick up the traces", Chuck has agreed to again do the typesetting and editing.

In 1978 he and Sally purchased a magazine, CHRISTMAS TREES, since they were in the business of growing and selling Christmas trees from their 70-acre place northwest of Lecompton; the property was originally given to Chuck's great-great-grandfather, Charles Wesley Garrett, by President James Buchanan, and the Wrights inherited it after the death of Chuck's parents in 1966, while Chuck was then Mayor of Topeka. Sally and Chuck moved to the property in 1973.

Under their direction and management, CHRISTMAS TREES magazine is now circulated worldwide with a paid circulation of over 8,200. It is the "World's Leading Christmas Tree Magazine". The Wrights have both retired and now have their own computers to produce the magazine, so THE BALD EAGLE will now become a part of their operations.

The Lecompton Historical Society would like to thank Ellen and Howard Duncan for their excellent work on THE BALD EAGLE. They have decided to retire as editor and typesetter. Ellen will continue to do the art work.

-- MEMBERSHIP REPORT --

This is the last issue for 1992. Be sure you renew your membership before the last of December so that you will not miss an issue. We now have 548 Life and Memorial memberships; 535 dues paying members, making a grand total of 1,083.

Life Members: Orren G. "Jerry" Davidson and James A. "Jim" Davidson by their father, James Davidson.

Iona Spencer
Membership Chairperson

Obituaries

Vada M. Fordice died October 7, 1992. She was born February 23, 1925, the daughter of Roy and Blanche Francis Zachariasen. She and her husband owned and operated a dairy and grain farm in the Lakeview area.

She married Bernard E. Fordice August 11, 1944. He survives. Other survivors include her mother, Blanche, a daughter, Dawn Bryant, two brothers, Delbert and Vernice; two sisters, Mildred Pasley and Frances Casey.

Helen Geraldine Collins of Emporia died September 6, 1992. She was born March 6, 1923 in Perry, the daughter of Henry and Nettie Plummer Leslie. She graduated from Lecompton High School and attended Kansas University. She was a member of St. Mark's Lutheran church. She was employed at Columbia Savings in Emporia.

She married Jack D. Collins March 6, 1940. He survives. Other survivors include a son, Phillip Collins, a daughter Colleen Gilliland, Augusta, three brothers, Harold, William and Homer, a sister, Edith; five grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

•••••

President - Paul Bahnmaier

Secretary - Marie Traxler

Treasurer - Alice Clare (Sally) Wright

Typesetter & Editor - Chuck Wright

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Forwarding and Address Change Requested

Published by

The Lecompton Historical Society

LECOMPTON, KANSAS 66050

-- DONATIONS TO THE MUSEUM --

Recent Donations to the Museum include:

1. A Family History by Kenneth Lewis.
2. 1908 Athletic Picture by Mrs. William Copeland.
3. History of Glass by Harry Hart.
4. Picture of Oregon Trail by Mae & Walley Halderman.
5. Historic Pamphlets by Howard Duncan.
6. Christmas Ornament by Roy & Marsha Pasley.
7. Christmas Ornament by Fay Tally.

-- CHRISTMAS VESPERS --

The Christmas Vespers will be held December 6th at 2:00 p.m. in the Lane Museum. The program will include the Community Singers under the direction of Kim Stewart, Cindy Daniels, Frances Sanford, Mike Stewart, and the Bell Choir of the First United Presbyterian church in Lawrence.

*The Lecompton Historical Society
wishes everyone a
Very Happy Holiday Season,
and a prosperous, healthy and
HAPPY NEW YEAR.*

Historical Writer - Sara Walter

Genealogical Writer - Iona Spencer

Illustrator - Ellen Duncan

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Lecompton, Kansas