

School history of Alexandria Nebraska

ALEXANDRIA NEBRASKA SCHOOL HISTORY

Excerpts from ALEXANDRIA SCHOOL HISTORY written in 1977 by Virginia Ruth Griffin Priefert of Belvidere, NE. The original sources were the official school record books of the Alexandria schools.

Submitted by Virginia Priefert

On May 18, 1872 a meeting was held at the home of Silas Alexander for the purpose of electing a school board. Byron F. Young, the Thayer County Superintendent of Public Instruction attended this meeting. It was determined that the district boundaries would be a 3 mile square. A 3 member school board was to be elected and it was resolved to have a three month summer school. The board would provide a suitable room for the school.

There were no records kept until the 6th of August, 1872 when J. F. Thomas, the Moderator, called a meeting to order. The secretary, Silas Alexander, recorded (please note his spelling) "It appeared by the RECKERDS that the treasurer elect was not qualified and the office was declared vacant. Hamilton Alexander was appointed to fill the vacancy and his AXCEPTENCE filed. Meeting adjourned Sine die"

Silas Alexander wrote the legal notice of a meeting for the purpose of designating a school house site and to decide to borrow \$4000 at 10percent interest and a tax be levied sufficient to pay the interest of said bonds. On September 9, 1872 lot 7 in block 8 was selected and designated as a school house site for District #24 Thayer County Nebraska. This lot is still used for educational purposes in 1997 as the Tucker Memorial Library stands on the site today.

John Nachtigall (also spelled Nightengale for the more "American spelling") married Silas Alexander's sister and he and J. F. Thomas were put on the building committee for a new school house.

As nearly as can be determined the first term of school was from October 3, 1873 to January 2, 1874 with Miss Mary Johnson as teacher. The northeast quarter section of section 10 and the whole section of 15 in township 3 range 1 withdrew from the district and started their own District #36. 80 years later in 1954, with redistricting being done all over the state, District #36 rejoined Alexandria School District #24.

In 1875 the school house was blown across the street and badly damaged in a severe wind storm. It was then moved to the corner where the St. Mary's Catholic Church stands. The treasurer resigned and the faded pages still reveal: "...TOTLE (his spelling) amount of orders drawn on the district treasurer was \$564.22. After paying all expense of repairs on the school house and making blackboards there has not been a sufficient amount to meet the judgement in favor of Baily Brothers..." The teacher's fund was overdrawn and a new levy was suggested. No summer school was held that year as money was not available.

Dr. James Thomas, who was also the town doctor, taught the next term of school from October 1874 to March 1875 with 17 pupils in very irregular attendance. Annie C. Gage held school from April 16, 1877 to July 31 1877. A fall term of school, starting September 1877 through December was held by George Bumbgardner. The school was closed for several days because there was not enough fuel to keep the building warm.

Jesse E. Jones was the teacher from April 12 to July 2, 1880 with 48 pupils enrolled. Enos Pray Griffin and his wife Ella Phar Griffin, who were both graduates of the Whittier Quaker College in Salem, Iowa had moved northeast of town and Mr. Griffin became the next teacher starting September 20, 1881 for a 6 month session with 61 students in the upper grades. A second teacher was then added to the school with Mrs. E.I. Parker teaching the lower grades with 46 students.

With this large attendance, a handsome two story wooden building with a bell tower was built on Mercy Street. Two teachers were employed until 1889 when a third teacher was added. Two more teachers were added a few years later.

In 1894 the school had nine grades and the first graduating class was held in the spring with four students. L. H. Thornburgh, editor of THE ALEXANDRIA ARGUS became the Professor. That year the County Superintendent supplied each school with a classification system book setting requirements for each grade level. Mr. Thornburg established the classification system and added the 10th grade.

W.A. Yoder was superintendent in 1911 when a two story brick building with basement was built north of the wooden structure at a cost of \$12,000. The 11th and 12th grades were added. Manual training was added for the boys and Home Economics added for the girls but were dropped in 1928.

The building committee for the new 1911 brick building were Frank. W. Cory, Mark T. Allen and Fred Jacques. Members of the board of education were M. T. Allen, F. W. Hubbard, L. H. Thornburgh and Charles Moore.

In 1936 bonds were issued amounting to \$5000 for an auditorium to be added to the existing building. Approximately \$5000 was received from the government for the WPA project. Robert Sulz, Charles Thornburgh, Mrs. Rebanis Sisler Dill, Ed Wolford, Edson Cane, Ben Allen, Mrs. Mary Bright and Marie Cane were members of the building committee and schoolboard. Frank Fritchie and Son were in charge of building the auditorium.

In 1954 a hot lunch program was introduced. For this the wooden one room rural schools from Jefferson County School Districts #30 and #77 were moved onto the school grounds to be joined together to become the kitchen and dining room for the program. This same year the half day Kindergarten was added. Consolidation with the nearby rural districts brought about the purchase of 2 school buses. Member of the schoolboard that year were Leonard Mussman, Erma Bennett, Melvin Dein, Flossie Simmons, Walt Schroeder and Ethel Sinn.

After 105 years, the Alexandria Schools closed when they became consolidated with the Daykin and Tobias schools forming Meridian School District #303 located near the town of Daykin. The class of 1967 became Alexandria's last graduating class and the 1911 brick building was torn down. In 1997 the auditorium and the two wooden rural schools that made up the lunch room and kitchen are still standing and used for Alexandria community affairs.