

PIONEER SCHOOLS!

(Contains information from Lake of the Ozarks Council of Local Governments book, "From These Beginnings." Used by permission)



Pioneer schools that date back to the 19th Century can still be found today...although they are usually falling apart from the test of time. In the earliest days, fathers and mothers taught their children by the light of the back log or when a young man fresh from school came along he was secured to hold a private school at the house of some settler where the children of the neighborhood would gather.

Sometimes, some ambitious young person would hold a subscription school. In these, each parent in the neighborhood paid so much a head for his children to attend. There were no school buildings and any vacant cabin in the neighborhood was used for that purpose.

Various private schools were held along the valley settlements in Pulaski County between 1840 and 1850 but they were not numerous. Waynesville was the first place to make a move toward higher education. In 1857, there was passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor on January 30th, "an act to incorporate the Waynesville Academy to be located in the town of Waynesville and was to have power to 'Confer degrees and such literary honors as are usually conferred by colleges of U.S.'"

The movement went so far as to have secured a lot on the hill south of the Courthouse and the lumber was on the ground. For various reasons it came to naught and the material was sold at auction. The oncoming war between the states caused education to fall in the rear of the struggle of life for over a decade.

The first schoolhouse eventually erected in Waynesville was a log structure built in the northeast edge of town. The next was a frame building in the southeast part of town, "still standing on stone stilts and almost ready to topple over, presenting its patched surface like cast of clothing" according to an 1889 account.

The third was a two story frame building of two rooms located in the northeast section near the Methodist Church. This building was erected in 1886. The school attendance was 75.

Although there is no recorded date for the building of the Passover School in Camden County, records show that the land was deeded to the school in 1886 by King DeGraffenreid. More than likely, the school was built within a year or two of that transaction.

John King DeGraffenreid is considered to be the founder of the Passover community. A Baptist farmer and blacksmith also known as "Uncle King," who according to a former Passover School student, picked the name for the community right out of the Bible. According to Mrs. Bethel (Edwards) Wallis, The whole neighborhood went together to build the school...much like a barn raising. Mrs. Wallis is a former Passover student and her father, William Edwards was the school district's clerk for 35 years.



The school is located in the rural community of Passover, which at one time boasted a barber shop, general store, a church and a post office. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, the one room school house was furnished with wooden benches, desks, blackboards, and a stand for the teacher. The students wrote their lessons on a slate and basically learned the "Three R's," ...readin' ...writin' ...and arithmetic.

Grades one through eight were taught by one teacher and at the end of the school year the eighth graders were tested for their total achievement. Passing the examination not only meant graduation, but qualified the individual for a teaching certificate.

In 1935, when Mrs. Alice Burns finished school at Passover, things had not changed much. A blackboard was tacked across the front wall and the teacher's desk sat in the right corner. A wood stove stood in the center of the room as the only source of heat and desks were lined along each side wall and down the center of the room. On either side of the door was a bench where lunch sacks were stacked beneath coats hung on nails. Bookcases stood on the left wall between the two front windows and at each front corner.

In 1940, the school was closed and for several years stood vacant. Deterioration set in and the structure was in danger of collapsing. Each year, a reunion is held on the fourth Sunday in August at the old log school to continue a restoration process. As the last remaining log schoolhouse in Camden County, Passover School represents a significant part of the Ozark's history.



When the Hancock bank was first organized it was housed in this building. The store was started in the early 1880's and burned down in 1919.

(Photo courtesy of Earl and Anna Roberts)



Houston High School graduating Class of 1919. C.W. Parker, former mayor of Waynesville and longtime superintendent of schools of the Waynesville School District, is the first person on the left in the second row.

(Photo courtesy of Houston High school principal Virgil Scheets)



This old mill was located at the Bennett Springs State Park near Lebanon.

(Photo courtesy of Earl and Anna Roberts)