

BOSQUE

LETTER

November 2012

Bosque County Schools

(As promised earlier, more about schools)

Currently Bosque County has eight independent school districts:

Clifton is the largest district with an enrollment of 1,140; Valley Mills has an enrollment of 606; Meridian has 526 students; Kopperl has 248 students; Walnut Springs has 212 students; Morgan has 131 students; Iredell has 114 students; Cranfills Gap has 88 students.

Clifton

Texas State Legislature incorporated the Clifton Academy February 11, 1860. Trustees were W. R. Sedberry. C. C. Dewey, W. B. Moore, L. H. Scrutchfield, John Locker, Samuel (R. S.) Barnes and J. Stinnett were the Trustees of this small log structure built on the Clear Branch of the Bosque River, north of Old Town Clifton. In 1870 J. M. and Susan Locker sold land for a new school house, which served several purposes; lower floors were used as classrooms and the Masons met on the top floor. In 1881 when it was learned that the railroad would come on the west side of the Bosque, Old Town Clifton moved lock, stock and barrel with the railroad. A wooden school house was built by 1892 and was used until 1913, J. M. Bettis was Principal. In an oral history Palmer Olsen remembered that he helped the janitor and during rainy weather it was impossible to keep the floors clean, so they just shoveled the mud out the window.

This from the June 27, 1913 Clifton Record:

“The old school house on the hill has stood for 21 years. Its windows are condemned by the State Board of Health; its sanitary condition is known to be dangerous and has the smell of bats. It is a veritable fire trap where the children are crowded together. Yes, 72 boys and girls in one little room last session. Think of it!”

May 24, 1907 Clifton Record:

“We the undersigned qualified voters of the City of Clifton hereby petition you to order an election to determine whether the said City of Clifton shall assume the free schools within her incorporate limits. The required number of names have been signed and at the proper times will be presented for further consideration.”

April 30, 1915 Clifton Record:

“For Sale at Auction-The old public school building at 2:30 PM Saturday, May the 8th, at the Public School Building”

The first graduating class from public school in Clifton was the Class of 1903.

The school built in 1914 was three story brick, with a wing added in 1922. This building was demolished in 1939 and a new art deco style school was built by the WPA. Governor Pat Neff was the guest of honor at the dedication of the new school finished in 1940. He shared this: “There is nothing in the world more important than a human life. But that life, endowed by God with a capacity to learn, will perish without knowledge.”

Headline from the Clifton Record September 9, 1955:

“School Enrollment First Day 591.”

The War years of 1941 through 1946 saw many young men ending their education early for service of their country.

The Clifton Cubs were undefeated in 1953. The team was made up of Tek Outlaw, Bobby Conrad, Harry Cash, P.D. Wallace and Bobby Lane.

In 1985 a middle school was built and the elementary was remodeled; in 1973 a new high school was built and in 1999 a brand new high school was built.

Over the years smaller schools were consolidated with the main school districts. Bear in mind that until after WWII many of these schools were isolated, even though they might only be separated by eight miles. They served as a vital part of the community for social and educational purposes. Some even doubled as churches, community centers and fraternal lodges. It is also interesting to note that, with the exception of Cranfills Gap, the remaining independent districts were at one time located in communities with a railroad. Schools that consolidated with Clifton are: Womack, Norse, Harmony, Turkey Creek, Center Hill, Coon Creek, Smith Bend, Brown/Rock Cliff, Peak, Bergman, and Pleasantville. Garnersville, Walling Bend and Cooper schools were divided between Clifton and Meridian.

Clifton College

The college on the hill was organized May 6, 1896 as the Lutheran College of Clifton. On land donated by N. Jacob Nelson and T.T. Hogevald volunteers began building and the school opened October 28, 1897. In 1954 the school merged with Texas Lutheran College of Seguin. Name changes through the years were Clifton Lutheran College to Clifton Junior College to Clifton College.

Carl E. Olsen, Sr. bought the administration building in 1954 and opened his Gearench Manufacturing Company, which was dedicated in 1981 as the Carl E. Olsen Fine Arts Building of the Bosque County Conservatory of Fine Arts. Clifton College had been the repository for the artifacts collection of Jacob Olson since 1923, and later the collection and the remainder of the college was acquired by Clifton Lutheran Sunset Home.

From the "Rules and Regulations for Ladies Hall, Lutheran College of Clifton":

"Rooms must be put in order before 7:15 every morning. Sweepings from the rooms must be deposited in boxes provided for this purpose. Nothing whatever must be thrown out of the windows. No visiting, talking, laughing, playing or loitering in the halls will be allowed during the hours set apart for study and recitations; that is from 7:15 to noon, and from 1 to 4 pm, and from 4 to 7 pm. Pupils are earnestly requested and expected to be outdoors during the hours above mentioned whenever the weather will permit.

Pupils are permitted to visit each other and come together to sing and play during all hours not set aside for study.

Window shades must be drawn after lights are turned on in the building.

When first signal is given at 9:45 pm, pupils must prepare for retiring at once, and after 10 pm all must be in bed and quiet.

Pupils must obtain from the matron permission and excuses for absence from classes, lessons, chapel and church.

Pupils are allowed to shop in the city twice a week and be absent from the ladies hall on Sunday and one evening a week.

Visits to the city must be made Monday from 1 to 5:30 pm and Saturdays from 3:30 to 6 pm. Every pupil must pay for damage done by her to the building, furniture, reference books, library books, etc.

Walls must not be wantonly defaced.

Under no circumstances will pupils be allowed to carry victuals from the dining hall to their rooms, except in case of sickness, when permission must be obtained from the Matron.

Leaning out of and talking from windows is a sign of ill breeding and will not be tolerated.

Pupils are not allowed to read dime novels and other pernicious literature, and are advised to consult the teachers in regard to reading material.

Pupils must entertain callers in the parlor."

Dr. Carl Tyssen served as president of the college for 38 years and was known to believe that the best discipline was self-discipline. This belief was put into action many times and especially in the instance of a prank involving a mule. A mule was diligently brought into the auditorium on the second floor by the pranksters and left overnight and ready to surprise the morning chapel services. The pranksters must have been the surprised ones when at chapel service there was no sign of a mule or any residuary mess. Nothing was ever said about the mule, and the pranksters were never able to brag about what they had done without being found out, thus taking away all their fun!

Some may remember the cross that was on the front of the college and then later moved atop Tyssen Hall at the Sunset Home. The cross was placed as a memorial in honor of Sarah Knudson who had just graduated two days before her tragic fatal accident. Her father was custodian of the college and she was helping out by mowing the grounds. A thunderstorm was brewing and Sarah was struck by lightning.

Dorothy Ann Brown taught English at the college and wrote the book "We Sing to Thee, a Story About Clifton College."

For six years there was a huge rivalry between the Clifton Cowboys and the Meridian Cougars.

The boys and girls dormitories burned in March 1942 and in 1943 a huge new girl's dormitory was proposed, but the actual building was delayed by war. Tyssen Hall was dedicated in 1947. After the

college was closed in 1954 Tyssen Hall was used by the Sunset Home until 2001 when the home was remodeled.

Ole and Syverine Hoff

Peder and Berthe Olson immigrated to America in 1867, and reached Bosque County on December 24, 1868. They lived with Berthe's sister Kari (Mrs. Jens) Ringness for a year. When Peder Olson went to register the 200 acres he had purchased from Ole Ringness he was told he would have to use another name because there were too many Olsons on the books. His wife Berthe had inherited a farm in Norway called Halstenschof so he wanted to use that name, and he was informed that name was too long, so Peder shortened it to Hoff. They raised many children in the Norse area, one of whom was Ole. Ole married Syverine and they farmed all their lives in Norse. They never had children, however they did raise a niece as a foster child. Ole died March of 1933 and Syverine died October 22, 1956. Syverine donated and later left the bulk of her estate to Trinity Lutheran Church and Clifton College and as a scholarship program.

I was recently contacted by Pat Bodine who requested information about the Hoff family and especially Syverine. Pat explained that in 1954 she was awarded a scholarship to attend Texas Lutheran College in Seguin and the money was donated by a benefactor named Mrs. Syverine Hoff. Pat goes on to say that she had meant to contact Mrs. Hoff but got busy with pursuing her education and time slipped away. She would like to express her heartfelt gratitude for the kind lady from Clifton who made it possible for her to graduate from college! What a great story.

Clifton College archive files located in the Collection: Clifton College file; photograph file; manuscript files MSS062, MSS064, MSS067, MSS101, several yearbooks and one copy "We Sing To Thee, a Story About Clifton College" and the Clifton Record.

Next issue will feature Valley Mills Schools!

Thank you to Collection Members

The Bosque Collection and the Bosque County Historical Commission wish to thank all our faithful members for their continued support. In these difficult economic times we appreciate that support more than ever, and know that your kind donations will be used in the best possible way. Our mission will remain the same: to gather, preserve and document history. The Collection has not requested County funds for the last four years in order for the county to continue providing vital services in other areas. Costs of microfilming have tripled over the past few years, and the BCHC is working on ways to continue preserving county newspapers in a more economical way. The Collection in conjunction with the Meridian Library has applied for a grant to have original issues of the Meridian Tribune digitized.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions and any help you care to offer, whether it be through donations of historic and other materials, advice, time or monetary gifts. Remember this Collection belongs to the people of Bosque County, we always welcome your input.

As a way of saying thank you, the Collection is offering memberships now with a Senior Discount. Anyone over the age of sixty-five will only need to pay \$10.00 for one year membership. Of course all donations are welcomed, and please spread the word about us to friends and neighbors.

Once again thank you!

