

SCHOOLS

Schools were in the news in New Albany and Floyd County this past summer when the City and County School Board voted to merge the two school systems into one to form the New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated School Corporation. This historic forward step is the end of one period and the beginning of a new. Our program today will take a look back to the beginnings of education in this area and trace the story of development that led to the consolidation move this summer.

The history of education in New Albany and the history of the town itself begin at almost the same time. The Scribner brothers, who founded New Albany in 1813, were anxious that a school be established as soon as possible and they set aside the profit from the sale of certain lots to establish a school fund of \$5,000. Just exactly when the first school here was put in operation isn't known, but it was about 1815 or 1816 in a log building erected on State Street near Spring Street. It was in this building some 150 years ago that one teacher and a handful of students opened the first chapter in New Albany's educational history.

This wasn't the first school in Floyd County, however. That honor probably goes to Greenville where a "subscription" school was opened perhaps as early as 1814. "Subscription" schools were started by wandering school teachers who held classes in any handy vacant room or cabin after persuading a number of families to "subscribe" to the school, or as we would say today, to pay tuition to send their youngsters to the schoolmaster to pick up a little reading, writing and arithmetic.

Other subscription schools were started in the early days in many parts of the county. About 1820 one was established near Scottsville and another near what is now Floyds Knobs. A third was located north of New Albany near the present location of Mount Tabor School.

Schools were multiplying in New Albany, too. There was no school system as we know it today and no taxes for schools, but voters were able under state law to organize a school district and build schools, charging tuition to cover expenses. Many schools in New Albany were built under this plan and one of them, the old Main Street School, is still doing duty as the School Administration Building.

The school system as we know it today came into being in 1852 when the new State Constitution authorized a public school system with power to levy taxes. The very next year the New Albany district schools and the school founded by the Scribners were consolidated to form the city school system. The Scribner Fund had been used in 1849 to erect a two-story brick building at West First and Spring and this became in 1853 the New Albany High School. At about the same time the district schools in the county became township schools under the charge of the township trustees.

Although the appointment of Charles Barnes in 1856 as New Albany's first school superintendent seemed to indicate that the school system was well on its way to a bright future, troubled days lay ahead. An Indiana Supreme Court ruling that school taxes were illegal meant the schools had to limp along with a little money from the State Department of Education, closing without ceremony whenever the money ran out. Then came the Civil War and the schools were closed to be used as Army hospitals. Many private schools were opened to fill the gap, and though the public schools were reopened in 1864 with tuition fees, there were still 12 private schools in 1868. Not until school taxes were again

made legal did the private schools disappear. Meanwhile the first parochial school at Holy Trinity was opened about 1850 followed soon by St. Mary's.

New Albany schools kept pace with the city's growth, and in the township one-room schools dotted the landscape until the 1920s when, under the leadership of County School Superintendent Glenn Scott, they were replaced by modern consolidated schools. In 1948 the township school system was consolidated to form a county unit.

Only a single one-room school remained – the one at Navilleton. When classes opened this fall the Navilleton School was silent. The era of the one-room school had come to a close as the New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated School System opened a new chapter in our 150-year history of education.

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