

PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY

Organized education reached Meade County KS area in the 1880's. The very first school buildings were made of heavy sod and had very simple furniture.

A two room frame school building was completed in 1888. Tom Dillinger was the first teacher of the school with a salary of \$30 per month.



**Plains Grade School
1907 (2 rooms)**

The school was a one teacher pioneer "country" school from 1888-1912.

In 1912, the two-room schoolhouse was sold and a modern two story, seven room brick building was built. In 1913 the enrollment was approximately 30.



Plains School 1914-1915
Old Grade School in background.
This was before the High School was built.

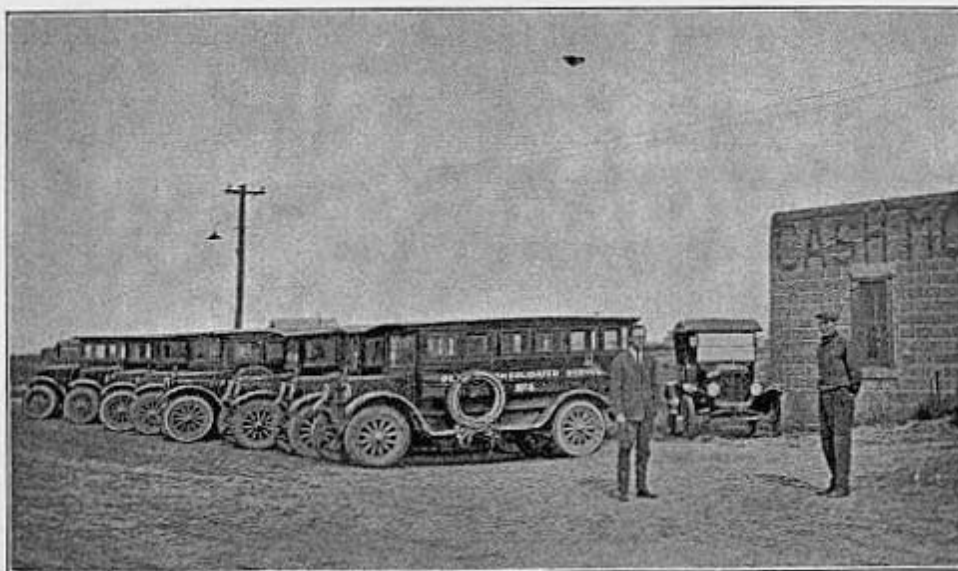
One of the highlights of the times was the starting of a two year high school and adding courses as the need arose. The high school started with 4 boys and 6 girls on the 2nd floor of the school.

At the beginning of the 1919 term, the school enrollment had jumped to 37 students. Plains High School graduated the first class in 1919. In 1920 the school board formulated plans to consolidate eight rural schools in nearby areas. Previous land area of the district was 36 square miles, but would expand to 101 ½ square miles.

By consolidating the rural schools, several problems arose. The school building was much too small for the anticipated increased enrollment; transportation needed to be provided and additional teachers to be hired.

A bond election was held and carried by a large majority and in 1922, the existing building became the grade school and a new \$46,000 high school building was built. The building contained 12 rooms, a full basement and a small gymnasium. Due to the enrollment increase, three more teachers were employed in the high school and four more teachers were added to the grade school faculty.

Eight new school buses were bought (see picture from 1925 Plainsman yearbook). The superintendent N.R. Nyquist reported the following to the state superintendent's office: "During the month of September the buses operated a total of 20 days and traveled a total of 7,426 miles carrying an average of 327 pupils a day. Eight school buses were operated at a total of \$573.48 for maintenance costs at a daily cost of .47 cents per child."



SCHOOL BUSES

The equipment for transportation consists of eight large trucks and a Ford touring car. A garage is maintained for the care of the busses alone. The average daily trip for the busses is 398 miles, carrying an average of 184 children. Reports from the state show that the bus service of the Plains schools is unexcelled in the state of Kansas.

Mr. Hiatt, who has had charge of the busses since consolidation became a part of the school system, has a record of being the most efficient mechanic in the state in his line of work.

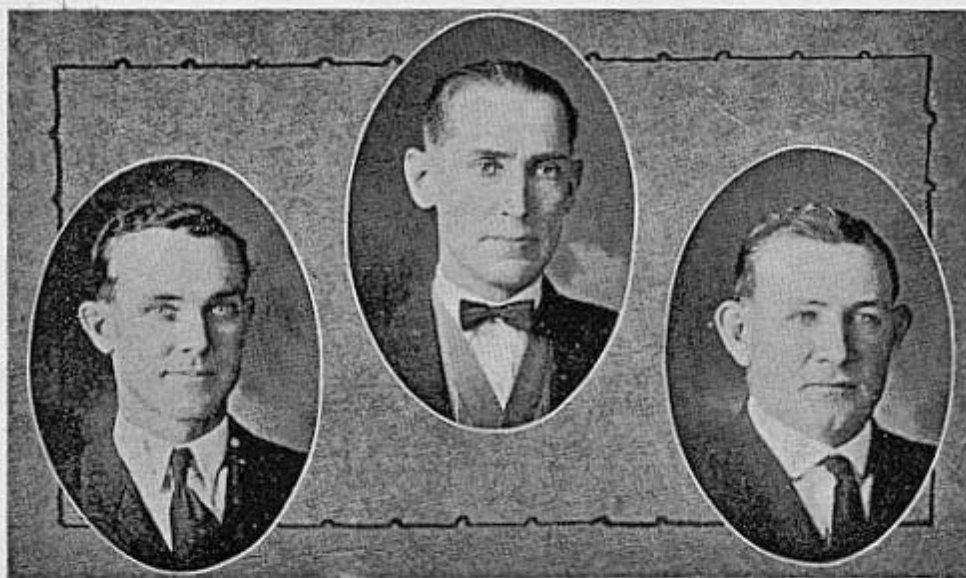


J. H. HIATT
Mechanic

The Plainsman



PLAINS CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL BUILDINGS



DISTRICT BOARD

R. C. Elliott, Director

R. H. Traylor, Treasurer

J. D. Golliher, Clerk

By 1928, the enrollment had risen to 110 in the high school and the departments of industrial arts and music had been added to the curriculum. The band and vocal music classes were held in a little room on the first floor while the industrial arts department was situated in one room of the bus barn.

In 1930, the board of education hired two additional teachers in the high school and two additional teachers in the grade school. W. E. Woodward was hired as superintendent to succeed H.C. Van Voorhis who had been in Plains since 1926.

The period from 1930-1940 was very difficult for the school. The depression lowered the fiscal evaluation which in turn lowered the number of teachers employed and the salaries paid to teachers. For instance, Mr. Woodward's salary was \$311 per month in 1930 and in 1936 it was \$175 per month.

From 1938-1948, the school had three superintendents: E.A. McFarland, Carl Riggs and A.H. Bergen. After the depression, teachers' salaries gradually increased and the buildings were repaired and brought up to date.

In 1941, the school entered the Little Six League with Kismet, Copeland, Montezuma, Kingsdown and Englewood. League activities consisted of six-man football, basketball, baseball, track, music, speech and drama. As the school enrollment grew, eleven-man football, the High Plains League and later the Iroquois League became a part of the school culture.

In May, 1947, the patrons of the district voted bonds for an extensive remodeling and building program. Plans were initiated for the building of a vocational agricultural and lunch room structure along with adding on to the gymnasium and extensive remodeling of the grade school.

The gymnasium was doubled in size and modern dressing rooms were provided for both boys and girls. Plains had the best gym in the area and was awarded the opportunity to be the hosts for the district basketball tournament. The vocational agriculture building contained a large kitchen, dining room, music room, rest rooms and a large metal and woodworking area as well as a modern agriculture classroom and office.

During the summer of 1950, a lighting system was installed at the football field. On Saturday, September 23, 1950, the first night football game was held. The American Legion dedicated the field in memory of the men who had given their lives during World War II. Those honored were Jack Staples, Joe Fleming, John Hatcher, Donald Knott, Bob Elliott and Charles Woltje. About 1200 people were in attendance and Plains beat Fowler 12-0!

A driver training program was started in the 1951-52 term with the new Chevrolet dual-control car furnished by Holmes Motor Company. Warren Peterson, the commerce instructor, doubled as the driver training teacher. Imagine the stories that could be told!

In accordance with the latest education thinking, the patrons voted to set up a Special Education Program. In 1952, the board employed Henry Patterson to implement the program.

In the early 50's, the valuation of the district reached a new high due to the annexation of a strip of land south of the Meade State Lake. The Michigan-Wisconsin pumping station is located on this land. An extra bus was purchased to handle the increased enrollment.

In the spring of 1960, a new grade school building was completed. This new building was built around the old grade school which was then demolished when the new building was completed.

The Class of 1965 was the last graduating Plains High School class. The high schools of Plains and adjoining town of Kismet consolidated and the new school became Southwestern Heights (SWH) High School. This new school was located equal distances from Kismet and Plains on Highway 54. The classes of 1966 – 1969 attended a portion of their education years at Plains High School before completing their education at SWH.

Most Plains High School graduating classes took class trips to many areas of our great country. These trips were funded by the money-making activities of the classes during their high school years. Each class contributed their part to the PHS history by writing class prophecies, wills and histories. Most are amusing to read!

Pranks and practical jokes abounded throughout the years: a student's car was carried and placed between 2 trees so it couldn't be backed up or go forward. Eventually, the culprits had to come forward and remedy their prank. Boredom can sometimes set in during the middle of an English class with a student yelling "fruit basket upset" with students jumping up and changing seats! Story has it a cow found its way up to the second floor of the high school! These are just a few of the stories that became legend! Not all PHS students were always the most angelic!

Clubs and extra-curricular activities of Plains High School included FFA, Y-Teens, Pep Club, Girls & Boys Glee Club, Mixed Chorus, Band, Jazz Band, Orchestra, Drama Club and plays, Cheerleading, Football, Basketball, Track, Golf and Tennis. Many groups and individuals achieved recognition at the State level. Some graduates continued these activities beyond the halls of PHS, at college, ball fields and even to the Olympic trials.

Plains High School sports have a long history of outstanding teams and individuals. Many seasons of undefeated teams are too numerous to list. Outstanding sports figure, Ruth Novinger, class of 1930, scored 90 points in one game in girls' basketball, a State and National record at the time. That team went undefeated from 1928, 1929, 1930 and won 40 games in a row.

PLAINSMAN



GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Supt. H. C. VanVoorhis first brought fame to the Plains High School girls' basketball team by taking them through two undefeated seasons, the first year taking first honors in the Panhandle Tri-State Tournament at Goodwell, Oklahoma, defeating Dalhart, Texas, in the finals—a team which had not been defeated in three years. In the year of 1928-29 the team went through an undefeated season; again, proving themselves worthy of the Southwest championship by defeating Englewood in a title game at Meade.

At the beginning of the present season, with but three regulars back from last year, it was very uncertain just what the team would do. But with the available material, and under the direction of Coach Dan Ratzlaff, a team of championship calibre was whipped into form. This team ran their string of consecutive victories to 40, considered a state record. The Plains girls are ready to defend their Southwest championship title, having twice won over one of the strongest teams in this section, namely Meade.

In the past three years Plains has put out some flashy basketball players. The flashiest and most consistent player of all time is the star center and forward of this year, namely, Captain Ruth Novinger. Ruth has never been out-jumped at the tipoff, and has always held up her end in fast floor work and scoring. Malda Bachman, another three-year player, plays guard. In several games this year Malda has held her opponent almost scoreless. She baffles her forwards by catching their dribbles and recovering the ball from the backstop. Other regulars this year are Claire Armentrout, Agnes Klein, Leona Smith, Cleo Frederick, Lois Witter and Ethel Jerrell.

The school had several long-serving and loyal employees, including Fern Marx Schaffer who worked in the school kitchens for 32 years from 1955 (PHS) to 1987 (SWH) with 30 of those years as head cook. Her meals were outstanding. Haskell Holmes graduated with the first class of 1919; becoming a teacher, coach and long-term member of the school board for 22 years. A.J. Sinclair taught Industrial Arts from 1949 to 1969, retiring from the new consolidated school of SWH. These are just a few of the many employees that dedicated their lives to the students and community of Plains High School.

Plains High School's team colors were red and white. The team mascot was the "Plainsman". The school song was The Plainsman sung to the tune of "The Caisson Song".



Plainsman Song

*Over hill, over dale, we have hit the dusty trail, as those Plainsmen go rolling along.
Up and down, in and out, we are marching all about, as those Plainsmen go rolling along.
For it's Hi! Hi! Hee! On the field, we'll always be, shout out your numbers loud and strong....1, 2
For where'er we go, we will always know that those Plainsmen go rolling along!
That those Plainsmen go rolling along!*

The many sports, music and FFA trophies and plaques that were housed in the trophy cases at Plains High School have been rescued and are now proudly displayed for all to see at the Plainsman Room in the Plains Community Activity Building. The Plains Community Activity Building is the site where the all-school PHS Alumni Reunions are held, making it easy for the alumni to view the trophies and reminisce with stories that get better with age!

Over the years, the all-school PHS reunions have been held every five years and in recent years every 3 years. In 2019, the Plains High School alumni will hold their 100th all-school reunion August 3. Reunions have been very well attended over the years, but are certainly seeing their numbers decrease each reunion.

The Plains High School has a website devoted to a history of the school and the many students, teachers and administrators involved through the years. Alumnus Kirk Coats (PHS class of 1959) has been instrumental in setting up the extensive website and very dedicated to its maintenance. The website is www.plainshighschool.com.