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BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL

(Transcribed by Cindy Whirley Nelson from History of Old Tishomingo County 1832-1940, compiled by S.M. Nabors)

The earliest school situated within the present corporation limits of the town of Belmont was known as the Gum Springs School. Existing from about 1872 to 1899, it took its name from an adjacent spring which furnished the water supply, and was first housed in an eighteen-by-twenty-four log building (later replaced by a frame structure) with the typical chimney and the usual rough fixtures of the period. It was first organized as a one-teacher school, and continued so until 1896, having as its teachers such men as L.R. Davis, W.T. Clark, Joe Kay, J.T. Vaughn, W.T. Shook, P.A. Gates, R.M. Perry and R.L. Shook. With R.L. Shook and wife as principal and assistant, it became a two-teacher school in 1896 and continued so until 1899. The curriculum, ungraded, consisted of spelling, writing, reading, arithmetic, and geography. Teachers' salaries ranged from \$20.00 to \$35.00 per month.

In 1899, R.L. Shook, W.L. Cranford, J.C. Hallmark, G.A. Clark, C.S. Shook and others chartered what was known as the Belmont High School, which continued to function until 1908, using the Gum Springs quarters, a second one-room building having been erected in 1899. Among the instructors who taught the school during this period were T.A. Clark, W.I. Elledge, J.P. Matthews, and Jeff Busby. The courses of study were extended to include the approximate range of the present elementary school, with perhaps a subject or two on the high school level.

In 1908, with C.C. Shook as Mayor, W.W. Shook, clerk, Dr. R.L. Montgomery, Sam Beaty, and Dr. K.F. McRae, alderman, the town of Belmont established the Belmont Separate School District, using a 2-story frame structure of three classrooms and an auditorium. The faculty was now increased to three or four teachers, C.W. Davis being the first principal. Other prominent educators serving as principal during this period were D.R. Shelton and E. Strickland. The curriculum was approximately equivalent of the present three-year high school, ancient with modern history, two courses in Latin, two courses in algebra, English and American literature, physical geography, geometry, and physics being offered.

In the spring of 1920 the frame building burned, and for the two following sessions public buildings and churches of the towns were used to house the school. In 1921, the Belmont Separate District voted a bond issue of \$25,000.00 to erect the present buildings, a brick structure of one story, containing a large auditorium and thirteen classrooms. In 1922-23, Supt. J.D. Langston, Miss Edith McRae, Mrs. J.C. Patterson, Mrs. B.L. Johnson, Mrs. Bill Davis, and Mrs. A.G.W. Byran composed the first faculty in the new building. Twelve units of standard high school work were offered, this being increased the following year to sixteen. L.D. McCoy and J.D. Finch also served as superintendents, and under the latter's superintendence, in 1927, and under his leadership that session, the separate school district was abolished and a consolidated district formed by the union of the Belmont territory and the Pittsburg school district. The following year the Fifth District Special Consolidated School District was organized by merging the consolidated districts of Belmont, Valley, and Cotton Springs. By this time the faculty had grown to 20, and the high school curriculum had increased to nineteen units.

In 1931, H.L. Shook became superintendent. In 1933, a teacher's home was purchased, a vocational building erected, and the institution became a Smith-Hughes school, with W.G. Jack teaching agriculture and Miss Susie Parker home economics. This same year a commercial department was added. East Prentiss became a part of the consolidation in 1933 and remained so until 1937. A brick veneer gymnasium was constructed (1934-36) with CWA and WPA assistance. The Allen Line Consolidated School was added to the District in 1934.

At present the school district contains approximately sixty-five square miles of territory, has an assessed valuation of \$314,000.00, enrolls according to the 1937-38 annual report 812 pupils, of whom 159 are in high school; has a faculty of twenty-two members, and offers 24 high school units distributed as follows: 4 in English, 5 in social science, 5 in vocational subjects, 3 in commerce, 4 in mathematics, and 3 in science.