

Wright City High School History

Researched and written by Jack Dixon

Preface

Time continues; never stopping, and its physical make-up never changing - A minute is still 60 seconds, an hour is still 60 minutes, and a day is still 24 hours. However, everything surrounded by time changes constantly.

Sometimes we reflect and look back on time to evaluate where we've been; sometimes we go back further to see how life, in general, got us to where we are at. Time gone is history and unless we record it, it becomes lost! My hope is to reclaim some time for our school's history.

Several months ago, I was asked by a Wright City Alum, like myself, if I could help put some things together for our Alumni's web site. This enabled me to make some discoveries about the beginning of our school district. One thing I quickly noticed is how near we are to closing in on our high school's centennial of when it all began. My curiosity led to more discoveries and other findings about our beginnings because we were the last community in the area to have a high school. However, the legacy of this school district reveals that the leadership during this period had great tenacity to grow this high school quickly once it began, which I felt needed to be shared.

While slow to gain high school status during the early 20th century this school took a progressive approach in building a quality educational system; not just for our local children, but for students from nearby towns as well before school districts were established. An additional teacher was added during its second year, 1923/24. By 1930 the school had added a third teacher, by 1933 they added a fourth, in 1937 a fifth, and by 1938 they had six teachers' total.¹ Taking on this challenge prior to, and during the great depression, had to be an extremely hard undertaking during its infancy.

My research included reviewing old Yearbooks, which provides a plethora of information, looking at old clippings from the old Warrenton Banner (the early 1920's). Plus, I retrieved as much school history from nearby schools, as well, to help me understand school life in our surrounding areas.

Outline

- The school's early beginnings- the many one/two room schoolhouses scattered through his area.
- Building towards having a first-class high school.
- Those involved in building this idea, then moving on
- Educators that helped manage the school's growth through to a First-Class High School.
- The board of education that approved and sought this.
- -The original 5 High School Students

¹ Reference in the 1940 Yearbook

Introduction

Surrounding Wright City, like other towns near us, sits small areas known as townships. Today they mostly represent political boundaries for voting, etc. Most of these areas are no longer communities, but in by-gone times they were, and they were built during the early, settler times. As these small communities grew, they usually had a small mercantile with possibly a post office inside it. These small stores actually provided only the necessities for these folks, so when they needed items of more significance, they would travel by horse and wagon into the bigger town occasionally to get those bigger supplies, like fencing, or feed, etc. As time marched on getting to the big town became easier, with the advent of automobiles and overtime these communities dwindled. But, during their infancy the people of these townships would pool their resources together and build a church and a small schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was usually a one, maybe two-room structure where children could gather to learn their basic education, usually through the 8th grade. Their education was based on the 3-R's, reading, (w)riting and (a)rithmetic. These buildings were also used for community affairs as well. As these townships faded the small schools however hung on, well into the 20th century because they still reached the rural school children before the school buses became available. One such school in Wright City stayed operational until 1963, the Gibson school. This school taught the local African American children. Wright City alone had twelve of these schools, as listed below:² Most are gone now.

- **Brandt School**- Located on Highway M, between the CEF campus and Scheutzenground Road. This might be part of Warrenton
- **Blattner School**- SE of Wright City, located on the NE corner of the intersection of Blattner Road and Stringtown Road. Just west of Pumpkins Galore
- **Gibson School- School for the African American children**- Located on Highway J between Hemphill Road and Godt Rd. This school closed at the end of the 1963 school year with the final integration into Wright City's school district in Fall of 1963
- **Goat Springs School**- Bell Road, approximately ½ mile north of Klausmeier Rd.
- **Hughes School**- Archer Road and South Service where across the road from the new packing plant that will be built in next year or two
- **Pitt School**- Highway M, west of the Christmas Tree Farm
- **Rocky Ridge School**- Scheutzenground Road, near the Harmonie Church area
- **Pleasant Hill School**- Ranch Road, just off of State Hwy AA, might be part of Warrenton. This building was just recently remodeled.
- **Upper Charrette School**- In the heart of Innsbrook on west side of Highway F.
- **Tugue School**- Highway O, west of Links Road
- **Wide Awake School**- Intersection of Highway T&M
- **Wright City's School**, Located where the present-day Liberty Christian School. Note- the second year of the original Highschoolers they went to this site instead of back to city hall site, because the town passed a \$3500 bond for an additional 2 rooms³

² Missouri Gazeteer- Map location of historical sites. I researched schools of Warren County, Mo.

³ Referenced from the 1933 Yearbook

Informational note- Wright City's first school started during the mid-1860's. During this same period, the main church of Wright City was a Methodist Church, of German Descent, was where the school children attended, and it was torched and burnt to the ground by the Union soldiers. In 1905, they built their first schoolhouse.⁴

By the late 19th century attention to expand the classroom to higher grades (high school) grew, as many city schools in St. Louis and Kansas City started to provide them. At first many of these schools only taught up to the 10th grade. Overtime they would expand to the 11th and finally the 12th grades. This movement, however, was slower in the rural areas due to economic and population constraints.

By 1916, Wright City's School had hired an overseer to manage all of their small schools, known as a Superintendent his name was O.P. Browning. By 1919 they hired an assistant for him- Grace Wegner.⁵ I'm not sure if Mr. Browning was the first Superintendent, or not.

Prior to the 1920's the following towns, near Wright City, already had their own High Schools:

Francis Howell High School (serving Southern St. Charles County)- very small amount of information is given about their history other than they list their high school's beginning as September 1915 when they became the Consolidated District Number 2, which was voted as the name by their school board. Then in February 1916 they changed that name again to Francis Howell High School.⁶ I believe they only taught up to the 10th grade until sometime in the 1930's.

Fort Zumwalt High School (O'Fallon and parts of St. Peters). In 1910 Ft. Zumwalt consolidated all of its small schools into 2 school locations: a grade school and a high school. This first high school operated until 1918, when a parochial school was established in the area. Being a predominantly Catholic Community in O'Fallon and the surrounding areas, it became detrimental to the public high school as most of the Catholic high school children transferred over to the parochial high school. Therefore, the public high school shut its doors and any child that wished to continue in the public education system was transported to either St. Charles or Wentzville.⁷ It stayed that way until 1960.

Wentzville High School- The first high school to graduate from Wentzville is listed as 1898. However, it wasn't until 1938 that Wentzville extended their high school from 10 years to 12 years.⁸ This is important to remember as I get further into Wright City's History.

Buchanan High School (Troy)- Troy was one of the most progressive schools in the area during this time. Their first Senior graduating class was in 1929.⁹

Hawk Point High School- This school operated from the early 1920's to 1945. After this the students wishing to continue their education transferred either to Buchanan, or Warrenton. I also believe some came to Wright City as well. This school never taught students past the 10th grade.

⁴ Referenced by the book, Images of America: Warren County by Dorris Keeven-Franke p.73

⁵ Referenced from Warrenton Banner April 7, 1922, no author given

⁶ Referenced from Francis Howell History, no author listed

⁷ Referenced by Fort Zumwalt History, no author listed

⁸ Referenced from Wentzville Historical Society by Deborah F. Bowman

⁹ Referenced by History of Buchanan by article written by June Groshong July 21, 2003, in Missouri Heritage

Warrenton- I found very little history listed for Warrenton High School, except excerpts I uncovered in the Warrenton Banner from the 1920's. One item of interest I found in this paper stated the Warrenton School had attended multiple debates against several different schools: Hawk Point, St. Charles, Holstein, Marthasville, etc. during 1921 and 1922.

One thing I found interesting was printed in this paper on April 25, 1922- *The Warrenton School Elects the following teachers for the coming school year's faculty- C.R. Aydelott for Superintendent and Principal, Clara Reinlenschneider assistant to High School; 8th Grade- Nelly Farmer, 7th grade- Bertha Williams, 6th Grade- Paul Stock, 5th Grade- Elsie Godt, 3rd and 4th grade- Anna Herman and 1st and 2nd grade- Kate Moore.* The interesting fact is that Ms. Reinlenschneider is listed only as an assistant to the high school, while there is no other mention of anyone else being the actual high school teacher(s). If Warrenton is only tutoring these students, then how did they have a debate team? Also, nothing is ever mentioned about Wright City having a debate team during this period. However, Hawk Point, Marthasville, Holstein, all towns that no longer have a high school, had debate teams 100 years ago.

The remaining area schools included Marthasville, Truxton, Holstein/Treloar. But no history could be found.

I list these schools because of how they relate to Wright City during this period.

Another school that must be mentioned is the old **Central Wesleyan College (CWC)** in Warrenton. This institution started as an orphanage in the Warrenton area following the Civil War by the German Episcopal Methodist Church. They originally purchased over 900 acres in the area that border what we call today both Warrenton and Truesdale. By 1869 they decided to add a college to this campus to prepare students to be ministers in the Methodist faith. By the turn of the century, they offered other degrees as well. In 1930 it was reclassified as a Jr. College (however, they never offered anything above an associate degree anyway), and by 1941 after the devastation from the depression it closed its doors forever. All of its records were turned over to Kirksville Teachers College (now Truman University). I bring this up, because before the depression this small college was a higher educational treasure for this area. Many of the teachers that taught at the one room schools received their teaching certificates from this college. During this era, 2 years was all that was required to receive your certificate and become a teacher. Also, this school provided a resource for area students to complete their High School education if they only had 10th or 11th grade education so they could enroll in the college. Unsure if there was a relationship with this college and Warrenton High School, or not.

Wright City High School's Beginnings

As we now know Wright City was late in adding a high school to its district, as compared to other schools nearby. However, by 1922 many patrons of the community were ready for the school district to add one. As stated in the Introduction, O.P. Browning was the School Superintendent for all of Wright City's surrounding small schools during this time. Professor Browning, as he was known, took on the added responsibility of tutoring students wanting to work on high school courses prior to 1922. These students would meet with him occasionally to gather their workload, go over it, turn it in to him, then begin their next lessons. Every quarter they took a test on each subject. While the State did not approve of this method, they would allow these students to take a standard state test at the end of each year to see if they passed, allowing them to move towards taking sophomore classes.¹⁰

Wright City was strictly a farming community then and most of the farm's harvest provided only for the family- life in the early 1900's. Therefore, education was not a top priority for many families and of course not mandatory like today. Most families felt that an education up to the 8th grade was enough for their children, giving them the ability to read and write and of course arithmetic gave them a simple knowledge to be able to add and subtract. This was important when they needed to barter or buy things. By the time they finished eighth grade they were ready to help full time on the family farm!

However, times were changing by 1921 as Wright City did have a trade school, the Golterman Mechanical School. It was owned and operated by L.C. Golterman, and Roscoe Howard and it was not affiliated with any institution. Mr. Golterman was a mechanic and a blacksmith, and he taught these young men how to work on gas-powered motors for trucks and tractors, plus he taught sheet metal workings as well. On the other hand, Mr. Howard was an electrical engineer (he also managed the new local Electric Coop), he taught the electricity courses. They advertised their school as to being able to help young men learn the basics about the mechanics of gas-powered motors and electricity, so they would be able to know how to work on everything around the family farm.¹¹ Society was starting to change, and the development of education was evidently growing beyond the basic 3-R's.

Therefore, in the Fall of 1922, **Forest Strathman, Richard Koopman, Wayne Stoff, Gladys Nieburg and Arline Astroth** became the first students to walk through the first doorway of Wright City's High School. That first year the city made a deal with the school for the use of the city hall's room (uncertain as to its location), with no cost.¹² The school hired a new teacher/principal to teach these new high schoolers, O.E. Kettlekamp, at a salary of \$150 per month.¹³ That would be equivalent to a little over \$2500 in today's dollar. He was a 1917 graduate of Central Wesleyan College. After graduating he went into the ministry, but he loved teaching as well and had the credentials, so he applied and received the job in Wright City. The parents for these first students, each paid a subscription (tuition) of \$25 per month, plus the cost of their books, with the exception of Wayne Stoff. He was hired to be the janitor, and this provided him with the means to pay for his schooling expenses thus allowing him to attend.¹⁴ Nothing

¹⁰ Referenced from the 1933 Wright City yearbook

¹¹ Referenced as an advertisement throughout the different issues of the Banner in 1921 and 1922

¹² Referenced from 1933 yearbook

¹³ Referenced from Warrenton Banner Sept. 11, 1922

¹⁴ Referenced in the 1933 Wright City Yearbook

could be found further about these five students, except that Gladys Nieberg graduated from Central Wesleyan in 1928.

According to another article in the Warrenton Banner from 1922, *Mr. Kettlekamp will reside in the Rosenthal resident upon being hired by the Wright City School District and moving into the area.* It also states- *there would be twenty-two high school students.*¹⁵ It could be assumed that in addition to the five students going to school at city hall, he also took on the responsibility of tutoring the other 17 students. I am unsure about the payment arrangements for them.

I want to point out about how taxes were collected for schooling during this period, and they did, plus it is a lot different than it is now. Missouri's State Superintendent then was Mr. Sam A. Baker. Below is a reference from the Warrenton Banner in March 1921 in which Mr. Baker sent a letter to each community, referencing the state funds available to them and how to prepare for these allocations for their upcoming school year, if they needed them.

According to Mr. Baker (I am paraphrasing much of this) below is how to determine the budget needed for their school:

1. Determine the teacher(s) salary
2. Determine the Incidental cost + possible repairs to school
3. Determine needed equipment and reason (This is budgeted amount)
4. Each school then determine interest on bonds (if they have any)
5. Then, they must determine the amount of money that is expected to be left over from the previous budget
6. Then, they should list the amounts they will receive from public funds (subscription), and possibly county, townships, and railroad funds
7. Then add all of this together (items #4-#6).
8. They would then subtract this total amount from their budget (Items #1-#3) for their upcoming school year.

If their budget exceeded the money coming in then, they could submit a tax levy equal the difference. Rural schools got special state aid listed as State #11211 for elementary schools and State #11295 for high school. Limitation was based on \$.65 and \$1.00 on each \$100 valuation (unsure of the two different numbers). The letter also noted *"Very little was distributed over the years for high schools."*¹⁶

During this time, I believe people were unsure about the importance of high school partly because of the cost, the additional tax possibly being assessed, plus the loss of the child's labor on the farm. Also, school was not mandatory for upper-class students during this era either, so it was a hard choice, especially in farming communities. As mentioned before- during this period one of the popular extracurricular activities for schools was having debating teams between the schools. The Banner even listed one of the subjects debated between Warrenton and another school during this period-

¹⁵ Referenced in the September 11, 1922, Warrenton Banner, no author listed

¹⁶ Referenced in March 1922 Warrenton Banner, no author listed except was adapted from the State Department

To argue for and against the following subject, “education draws the boys and girls away from the farms.” Undoubtedly, a hot topic.

So how did the Wright City overcome these major hurdles and turn getting a high school into reality in the fall of 1922? Maybe the changing times and they suddenly realized education was becoming more important for the children? I don’t know! Also, little is known through my research about the families whose children were the first to be enrolled as Wright City’s high school student, except that Arline Astroth’s father was the local druggist and Gladys Nieburg’s family had a huge presence in Wright City and area during this period. The Nieburg family had several businesses dating back to one of the early townships- Pitts, in 1859, when Friedrich Nieberg started a wagon making business. By 1874 he moved their business into Wright City, because of the railroad.¹⁷ These wagons were shipped all over the Midwest. As time evolved their business interest expanded to selling automobiles, furniture and they also owned some mortuaries. They also expanded their business presence into Warrenton; it is assumed they were one of the wealthiest families then. Nothing could be found about the Strathman or Koopman family backgrounds, and of course Wayne Stoff worked his way through school. But I suspect these other two families had some means as well.

Listed below are the names of the men that sat on the Board of Education in 1922 when the first high school was voted in. Again, very little was retrieved about who they were or their backgrounds, except a couple of them.

- **William Krome** was a salesman that sold goods to grocery stores throughout the area.
- **Robert Struchtemeier**- Owned a butcher shop
- **Tony Owens**- I believe was a businessman, but not sure what type.
- **Amos Gerkin**- Nothing was found
- **John F. Case**- I believe this gentleman was the school’s main cog in getting this high school off the ground.

The 1933 yearbook also mentions William Heidtman as President and J.H. Stegman as secretary, but I believe they were part of some committee, because the yearbook mentions two different people as being President of the Board (Heidtman and Krome) during the same time.

The original 5 students received only a 10th grade education, because when approved by the board it was only approved as 10th grade high school. During their first year the school was recognized as a third-class school (providing only a 9th grade education, but their second year it was changed to a second-class school, because they had 10th graders).¹⁸

Besides the men that made up the Board of Education, I believe O.B. Browning was also an integral part of helping get this high school started as well. Everything written about him in the news clippings states he was a very good educator/administrator and very well-liked by the patrons all over. The assumption can be made that the partnership, between Browning, the board and these patrons all helped transition this school. Also, credit should also be given to L.F. Gooch; he became superintendent of Wright City much later, from 1929 – 1942 and overseen the school transition to first-class status (12 years) by 1931/32. Transitioning this school from second class school to first class is an amazing feat in just 12

¹⁷ Referenced from Images of America- Warren County by Dorris Keeven-Franke p. 51

¹⁸ Referenced from 1933 yearbook

years back then, while some of the other schools were still 10-year schools even after Wright City had evolved.

Over the years a lot was spoken about how many students came from other towns to our school. It is even mentioned in the 1933 yearbook.

*The local student body is made up of girls and boys with a wide range of addresses. The following post offices are represented in our directory: Warrenton, Foristell, Wentzville, New Melle, Marthasville, and Wright City. An interesting fact about our school is that 56 students out of the total enrollment of 75 are non-residents- a good sign that we are growing.*¹⁹

While this is an amazing stat, again it must be understood Wright City wasn't the first town to have a high school in the immediate area. However, I believe that becoming a first-class high school in 1931 helped increase the non-resident population for our school during this time and helped grow this school district, especially from other areas that already had a high school, but maybe not all 12 grades. Remember, Wentzville didn't go to 12 years until 1938. I believe Mr. Gooch's approach, once he got here, was to open the door wide to those children that couldn't get their completed education in their home base. This also brought in more subscription revenue as well. The other thing to remember about the school's growth then, it started taking off during the early 30's, the height of the depression. Also, before closing out this solemn period, Wright City was able to begin the construction of a brand-new multi-room, all brick school building. This building was large enough to house both grade schools and high schools and included a new gymnasium. Much of the funds to provide this construction came from President Roosevelt's WPA program, although, Wright City did have to come up with a bond at a fraction of the total cost. The total cost to fund this was around \$35,000,²⁰ except for the new Gym; that was paid for by private funds from the patrons of Wright City. This project also helped put some local unemployed workers back on their feet, by working on this project during these very hard times and the school district kept growing and progressing.

The non-resident students at Wright City continued until the late-1940's, around the time of the State School Reorganization. That's when a school district either got the designation of **C-** for consolidation or **R-** for reorganization, (Warren County **R-2**). After this change- whatever area you lived in, determined where you must go to school, also by now laws changed about children getting an education as well.

Those Responsible for Finalizing and Growing our High School

Professor O.P. Browning: During this era, school administrators were generally called Professor by the patrons; this has nothing to do with achieving a PhD in Education, but more about the leadership of the job. None-the-less, after searching extensively about him, I still know little about him personally: I know nothing about his hometown, where he was educated or where he went after he was no longer employed here. There is just nothing about him other than what was reported in the Banner. From the articles I read though, he appeared to be very well liked by everyone in all the out reaches of the Wright City area and he tried visiting all families everywhere and he was very attentive to all of the school

¹⁹ Referenced form the 1933 Yearbook.

²⁰ Referenced 1940 yearbook

children's needs. He attended the many children functions such as Christmas parties, valentines party etc. He was also very instrumental in the startup of the local PTA from the teachings side.

Professor Lyndell F. Gooch: Superintendent 1929-1941 and again 1943. Not much is known about Mr. Gooch personally; where he was born and raised, or why he was not Superintendent in 1942. Mr. Gooch came to Wright City in 1929 and he is recognized for seeing the school shift to a full 12 grade school and a 1st class school system. His tenure also saw the construction of the school building, built in the late 30's. He taught social studies, political science, and mathematics. Plus, he coached basketball for many years, both boys' and girls' teams. Mr. Gooch graduated from Kirksville State Teacher's College, Kirksville, Mo. (now Truman State) with a Bachelor of Science in Education. The records also states he garnered 12 hours from University of Missouri- Columbia, probably towards his master's degree. Prior to coming to Wright City, he taught at Wellsville, Mo. and Reger, Mo. Today, Reger is part of the Milan School District, Milan, Mo.

John F. Case- If John Case lived in today's world, he would be considered an icon! He may have been the town's torch that lit the flame for everything around Wright City during this period, especially getting our school's forward movement. To get the high school there were standards that had to be met by the state in 1922; yes, politics played a huge game even then. Also, the patrons had to come on board. However, Mr. Case had an impeccable resume, and yet little is talked about him in Wright City over the years. He was born on September 30, 1876, in Minnesota. His family moved around quite a bit; his father even homesteaded property in South Dakota.²¹ Eventually, his family moved to Northwestern Missouri where he became a printer's devil for a nearby newspaper, the Rea Times in 1890.²² A printer's devil is a person considered to be a gofer in the newspaper industry, but it's usually the start of their apprenticeship in this field; this was his education. During the next several years his experience increased by working at various newspaper. He married in 1899 and settled at Whiteside, MO. where he started the Whiteside Banner.²³ He continued with this venture for 12 more years, finally he was noticed by H.R. Nelson, editor of the Missouri Ruralist. So, he started to occasionally write feature articles for them until he was hired in 1911. The Missouri Ruralist was owned by Arthur Capper, who also owned Capper's Weekly and by 1913 he replaced Mr. Nelson with John Case for the Editor position. He stayed at the helm of this very popular paper until his retirement in 1955. He originally went to work for them in Topeka, Kansas. However, by 1919 this paper had grown so much, becoming a strong political advocate and voice for all the Farmers and Agriculturist of Missouri, that Capper decided to move its main office to St. Louis. Afterall, it was directed at the Missouri farmers, however, its voice was heard loudly in the surrounding states as well. It was at this time that Case bought a small farm in Wright City and lived there while commuting, by train, to his job in his St. Louis office over the next several years. He lived out the rest of his life in Wright City until his death in 1966.

During his time with the Ruralist he became very close with a writer, who had a very raw talent by the name of Laura Ingalls Wilder, of the Little House fame. He even hired her for her first job to write for the Ruralist, allowing her to give her hometown spin on rural life from Southern Missouri. While many critics praise her daughter for helping with Laura's writing skills on her life experiences in her books;

²¹ Referenced from "Adaption of Studies in American Popular History and Culture" by Jerome Nadelhaft pg. 33

²² Referenced from "Adaption of Studies in American Popular History and Culture" by Jerome Nadelhaft p.33

²³ Referenced from "Adaption of Studies in American Popular History and Studies" by Jerome Nadelhaft p 34

there are many that felt John Case provided her with some of her most valuable skills apprenticing for him while writing her stories for the Ruralist.

Mr. Case's work as editor of the Ruralist gave him a strong voice for all of Missouri's agriculturalist for many years, it also led to him being elected to the following esteem position:

- President of the Missouri State Board of Agricultural
- Board of Directors of the Missouri State Fair
- Director for the tourist bureau for University of Missouri
- Member Missouri Ag. Commission
- Member of Mo. Council of Defense
- President of the Mo. Corn Growers Association
- President the Ag. Club of St. St. Louis

He was even called upon to speak occasionally before the US Senate in Washington DC²⁴ on farm matters. If that wasn't enough, he also wrote a few novels during his lifetime. Besides his busy lifestyle and after moving to Wright City in 1919, he became extremely involved with the community instantaneously. Two years after moving here, in 1921, he started the school's first PTA and was its first President. By the next year he gave up that post to become a member of the school board, and by the fall of 1922 they had a high school. I won't say he did this alone, because I believe each of these other men were integral members as well, but he was truly an asset to this community until his death. Yes, Mr. Case had clout, and knowledge to get Wright City's voice to the outside. I wonder if he even helped in securing the WPA funding for the new school? He probably also had the voice to talk and encourage the locals, including those sitting on the fence, about the values gained by improving the schooling system in Wright City. Afterall, he was their voice on farm matters, but more importantly, he was one of them. He held many meetings in his one short year as its first PTA member and President, and I am sure he was selling education all the while.

Feb. 24, 1922- Wright City's Parent Teacher Association held a public special meeting at the local Methodist Church. Speakers were as follows: **John Case**- speaking on the virtues of PTA: National, State, Local; **Rev. Katterjohn**- What it means to the Community; **O.P. Browning**-What it means to have a school.²⁵ John Case set this meeting up and it was well attended.

Dr. Roland Struchtemeyer- While I decided not to include references about any Alums, because there are so many special ones and after being gone from the district for so many years, there are many I wouldn't even know. However, I felt compelled to mention this one. Dr. Struchtemeyer graduated from Wright City in 1935, only 13 years after the first high school began, so he may have been a first grader, when his father, Robert, helped get the first high school in this town, as a member of the board of education. Dr. Struchtemeyer may have been the first alum to gain such an impressive education; he graduated from the University of Missouri (1939) with a BS in Science; again, the University of Missouri with a Master of Science in Science (1941) and he gained his PhD with an emphasis on Earth Science at The Ohio State University (1951). He went on to have a very successful teaching career at the University in Maine and he wrote several books pertaining to Earth Science, about soils and preparing it for the

²⁴ Referenced partial notes of his speech to the US Senate. Date unknown

²⁵ Referenced from the Warrenton Banner

long haul for farmers. While I could not find how long his career spanned, I did find a paper from the University of Maine where he was quoted in 1985. Also, he is still very much revered and honored by the University with a memorial scholarship still in his name.

Summary

The premise of my research was the difficulties our community must have gone through a hundred years ago to start our high school then. While it was the last in the area to provide one, I believe once it became reality, it quickly became one of the fastest growing and best educational systems during those early growth years. For example, by 1925, 3 years after the first high school began, the enrollment grew from 5 to 24 students,²⁶ all attending classes.

Unfortunately, not all of my questions were answered.

1. Why was Wright City so late in getting a high school started?
2. Actual years when all the other schools actually providing up to the 12th grade.
3. How much impact did Central Wesleyan College have on these small local schools, by providing some high school courses?

This project came about by accident, but it took a life on its own once I started researching. It also brought me closer to my alma mater. One hundred years is a long time ago, and this project, while I struggled at times, I immensely enjoyed doing it. I am by no means a professional researcher, but I believe I uncovered a stone, or two. Sadly, I am sure there is more to be uncovered. It would have been interesting to talk to family members from these first students. However, the people I mentioned during this period no longer have family left here, or at least none that I know of. In my final analysis, I feel the men and women of this time believed in the greater good for this community and they brought in important people to build on it (teachers) and in the end a quality educational system was built. In a very short time, it was second to none!

Wright City's school has a legacy that makes its students, the teachers that either taught here, or still do, the alumni members and all citizens that live here very proud!

²⁶ Referenced by Warrenton Banner in Sept. 1925