

Past Perspectives

November 2016

Donivan School

(Editor's note: Last month's column featured the Donivan Church, built in 1935; this month's column is about the Donivan School.)

The Donivan School was started in 1884, and was annexed into Gravette in 1949. It is believed to have stood some distance from the church, just east of the intersection of today's Highlands Blvd. and Francis Drive. It was an L-shaped building, with two rooms, one for the higher grades and one for the lower grades. According to an article by Billie Jines published in the Northwest Arkansas Morning News on April 16, 1989, the schoolhouse set on the hillside overlooking a holler and a branch of a creek which was headed by a spring of especially good water. The children carried the school's drinking water from that spring until a well was drilled in later years.

Sometime over the years, the spelling of the name was changed, as it was William T. Donovan and his wife who gave the land for the school and for whom the school was named. The school, as was common in those days, served as a community center and a church on weekends, in addition to being a school during the week.

The territory served by Donivan School originally covered 9600 acres. In the 1917-1918 school year, there were 51 students enrolled with an average daily attendance of 32. That year the teacher was paid \$58/month, and the following year, \$65/month. By 1920-21, the teacher was paid \$100/month, the school term lasted five months, and there were 50 enrolled. In 1933, one square mile section, 640 acres, was transferred to another school district.

Jines wrote, "Students...attended school in the building on weekdays and went back there on Sunday for church. At different times, the Baptist, Pentecostals, and Church of Christ met there. The building also was the meeting place for pie suppers, singings and the Literary Club....The Literary Club held plays and musicals once a month...."

In early 1949, an election was held and it was decided to annex Donivan District #5 into Gravette District #20. Jines wrote, "As with all of the last country schools

in 1949, the move was necessitated by a new state law making it impossible for individual country schools to continue without a specified number of students and without a high school...."

In her article, Jines quoted Maxine Holloway who said, "The Donovan School stood for nearly 40 more years....In later years, the building had been used for a barn. In 1983 or '84, when I went over to go inside, it was full of hay. The building had stood for 102 or 103 years and then was burned by Bella Vista (Cooper Communities) after they purchased the land."

Information for this article was provided by Novella Funk Carlton. Lucas is a docent at the Bella Vista Historical Museum, located at the corner of Highway 71 and Kingsland, next door to the American Legion.

MEMORIES OF THE OLD SCHOOL

For over 100 years, on the hill, Donovan stood tall
And 65 years of service it gave.
With so many childhood memories living on,
This old school has now gone to its grave.

I can almost hear the children, laughing at play
As I dream of the days gone by.
My mother, her sisters and brothers, attended this school
As did, some of my brohters, sisters and I.

Children came from far and near, to get an education
Week days at the old Donovan school.
Sundays it was used for church
So they came to learn the Golden rule.

Week days, two children would take a bucket
And over the hill would go
To get drinking water for the school
From the beautiful clear spring below.

For these old schools, we loved so dearly
We dream of the happy years gone by.
So good bye old school, with laughter and joy.
We are sad and sorry to see you die.

So to our children, and children of the future,
I'm writing of memories I hold dear.
I think of the many happy times we had
In these old schools of yesteryear

By Maxine Holloway
1989
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This poem written by Maxine Holloway was printed in the Northwest Arkansas Morning News on April 6, 1989.



The students attending Donivan School posed for this picture on October 27, 1904. (Source: Northwest Arkansas Morning News, April 6, 1989.)