

# Files Spill Tintype Recollections



1906: GRADES 9, 10, 11, AND 12 AT HILL SCHOOL  
A far cry from today's kilts and chinos.

## System Launched By One Teacher

By MARY ELLEN MEAD  
Staff Writer

Although Birmingham is marking its centennial this month, its school "system," boasting one teacher, got under way as early as 1834, when the area was known as Piety Hill and had not yet been incorporated into a village.

The first public school was in a rented log house on Woodward Ave. near the Detroit Bank and Trust, and the first teacher was Rev. Lemuel Partridge.

The second public school was in a frame building on the corner of Maple and Chester, where tuition for nonresident students was half a cord of good wood. The third public school was built in 1885, located at W. Maple and Southfield.

In 1867 Roland Trowbridge helped raise \$12,000 to erect a new school building which was finished in 1869 and became part of what is now known as "old Hill School," currently housing our board of Education and other administrative offices connected with the school system.

According to an editorial in The Eccentric at that time, and on the basis of his professional background, the following is expected from Dr. Smith:

Encouragement for citizen participation in solution to school needs and problems.

Emphasis on total development of students.

Implementation of new, sound principles and methods of teaching.

Efficient administration of school affairs.

Effective communication between the administration and the public.

C. R. BEMIS was the first superintendent of the new school. Tuition at that time was \$5 a term and there were three terms.

Chapel exercises were started in 1880. At that time all students assembled in one room to hear a chapter from the Bible, repeat the Lord's prayer and sing hymns.

The first class was graduated in 1880 and had one member, Edward Bodine.

By 1890, enrollment had increased to 317, six teachers were employed and W. G. Cook, superintendent, was responsible for a well organized high school course.

In 1894 C. F. Waldo became superintendent and for the first time the school was approved by the University of Michigan. Mr. Waldo was superintendent until 1902 and under his administration great gains were made in efficiency and general school reputation.

RECORDS SHOW that in 1911 pretty Miss Rhoda M. Starr became a force in community affairs—not only as superintendent of public schools but on the social front as well as in musical circles. Under her charge, the schools maintained a steady growth in equipment, teaching force and efficiency. At the beginning of her reign, there was only one school building for the entire 12 grades, but during the next year Barnum School, a six-room grade building, was completed.

BY 1915, the school census showed 616 pupils. The Hill building could no longer accommodate both grade and high school children, so Barnum was erected. At this time Clarence Vliet became superintendent, and in 1918 Baldwin High School, a gift, in part, from Martha Baldwin, was built.

Preceding Mr. Vliet's reign as superintendent—a long one, from 1915 to 1932—Prof. S. M. Dudley and A. E. Bellis were superintendents during the years 1902 and 1904. Then came Charles W. Crandell, 1932-'36; Howard Crull, 1937-'41; Dr. Herman L. Shihler, for eight months only, during 1942, then Dr. Dwight D. Ireland, in office from 1942 to 1960.

AT A SURPRISE farewell dinner given for Dr. Ireland in June preceding his retirement, the board of education and the recreation board passed resolutions honoring this "man of the week."

The board of education resolution cited the "vision and guidance under which two high schools, a junior high school and seven elementary schools were built."

It said, "The Birmingham community has seen its school system under his leadership rise to a position of respect throughout the United States as one which encourages scholarship, morality and responsible citizenship."

WHEN OTIS W. DICKEY resigned after three years of being school superintendent, headed for Cherry Creek Colo., and a similar post there, he left many personal friends behind, plus a fine record of achievements.

Former president of the board of education, Mrs. Kathryn Loomis, summed up the latter by saying that among them were the reorganization and enlargement of the central office staff, an introduction of realistic budgeting and procedures, improved instructional procedures as a result of the curriculum studies, successful millage votes for both capital and operations and the introduction of summer school.

Dr. Dickey was followed in Sept. 1963, by current superintendent, Dr. John B. Smith, who came from Greenwich, Conn.



A. E. BELLIS



S. M. DUDLEY



HOWARD D. CRULL



RHODA STARR

## First Jury Included Birmingham Men

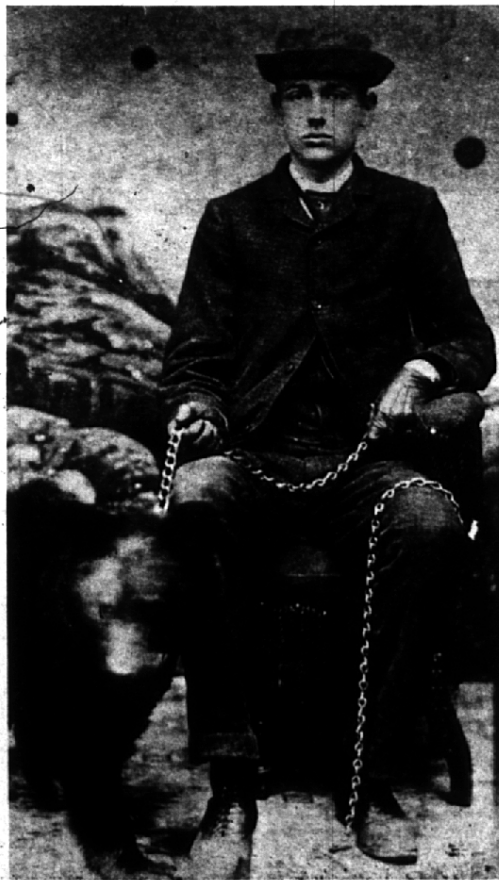
On July 17, 1820, the first Oakland County court was assembled with Hon. William Thompson as chief justice and David Bronson and Amasa Bagely as associates.

William Morris was appointed sheriff and Sidney Dole, a son-in-law of Dr. Ziba Swan, was clerk of the court.

The grand jury of the county court consisted of 17 members.

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## A Bear Roamed Streets



FRANK BROOKS AND HIS BABY BEAR CUB  
Companions met on a hunting trip.

Walking his bear on a chain leash through the streets of Birmingham was one of the popular pastimes of Frank Brooks, a young and hardy sportsman.

While on a hunting trip in the north woods in 1888, Brooks came in possession of a black bear cub, according to an account in The Eccentric that year.

He sent the bear, alive, of course, to his astonished father, Eugene Brooks, who had the responsibility of the cub's welfare until Frank's return.

THE CUB was playful and lovable and had a happy home with the Brooks family at its residence on Pierce St. where the city's Municipal Building now stands. He became quite tame, and Frank often took him for walks around the village, the village folks not being one bit afraid (so we're told).

The bear thrived and was doing well but toward winter refused to eat. Frank and his father were worried, but the bear just wanted to sleep.

The following year the young bear and Frank went to Pontiac and had their pictures taken. When the bear became too big for safety, he was given to a zoo, according to one old-time resident who remembers Frank and his bear cub.

SPORTSMAN Brooks also was an enthusiastic bicycle rider. He owned a Star bicycle, all the fashion in the '80's.

The Star bicycle featured a small wheel in front and a big back wheel over which the rider perched. The contraption was propelled forward by a straight up-and-down pumping action on the pedals, as contrasted to the familiar circular, or rotary, action of the feet with bicycles manufactured today.