

Story of Early Leesburg Schools.
Compiled and authenticated by Nelle E. Skeen (undated)

In Lone Oak Cemetery there stands a tablet of stone with a bronze plate placed there by Bertha Hereford Hall Chapter of D.A.R. to mark the location of the first school of Leesburg. This first building, made of logs, with a little graveyard beside it, was erected about 1865 for the use of the Lone Oak Baptist Church. Later it was used by the school and community during the week, and by the church on Sunday.

The earliest account is of a school by J.A. McCormack, and by a man named Garrett, and another taught there by Miss Nellie Livingston, who later married Mr. Rast the father of H.H. Rast. In 1869, Miss Livingston came down the Ocklawaha River by boat from Orange Springs, and then by ox-cart to Leesburg, where she taught a private school in this one-room log cabin. She boarded with Mrs. Mollie McEaddy, grandmother of Sandy Pike. At this time Bauknight's store was the only one in town.

In 1870 Col. J.W. Perkins taught the first private school inside Leesburg. It was located under a rough shelter beneath some oak trees where the Elks Lodge now stands.

According to an account written in 1894 by Mrs. Indiana Roach, who was a pupil in this first school, Col. Perkins was one of the first teachers in a schoolhouse that was built where the City Hall now stands. Wm. T. Kennedy, in his History of Lake County, also gives an account of this first school. The first floor of this building was used for church and school purposes, and the second story for a Masonic Lodge.

In this building private schools were taught by these people:

1872-73	J.R. Cunningham
1873-74	W.A. Hocker
1874-75	Mrs. W.A. Hocker
1875-76	J.W. Daniels
1876-78	W.C. Dodd
1878-79	Miss Nannie Gaines (afterward a missionary to China)
1879-80	J.W. Lees and Miss Theda Humphries
1880-81	Mrs. Lucy Spicer
1881-82	J.S. Jones

In 1880 a school house was built on Euclid Avenue where the Ames apartment now stands. This was a small frame building with no heating facilities, and with long backless benches, and wooden boxes for desks for the children, and a small table and chair for the teacher. Water was obtained from a deep (?) well and kept in a wooden tub with a gourd dipper conveniently near. In this building Mrs. C.V. Miller, mother

of A.L. Miller, taught the first PUBLIC school in Leesburg in 1881-82.

There was also this same year [1881] a private school held in a building erected for the purpose, taught by Miss Ollie Duncan (Mrs. E. Johnson). This building was located on S. Palmetto and Magnolia Streets. This building was later converted into a home. It was a one-room frame building and was used by W.C. Dodd and by the Summeralls.

In 1882-84 H.J. Waterman was a teacher of the school on Euclid Avenue. He was followed in 1884-85 by C.P. Summerall, later General Summerall, later President of Citadel. C.P. Summerall moved his school to the W.C.T.U. Building during the year 1885. According to Kennedy's History of Lake County, he was appointed principal of the public school of Leesburg in 1887, and "served in this capacity until he took up the military career, which he has followed so creditably and to such heights." W.J. Sumter succeeded Summerall, he was followed by Mrs. J.K. Simmons and Mrs. Ben Milam. In 1888 Miss Nannie Gaines served again and was followed by W.B. Summerall. In 1889-90 Miss Theda Humphries taught again. J.E. Barden was principal in 1889-1890 & in 1890-91 P.H. Robinson, with Miss Lizzie Miller as his assistant. They taught in the old K. of P. Building above the present location of Heiskell's store.

The new Constitution adopted for Florida in 1885 gave school districts the right to levy a special school tax. In 1889 Leesburg voted to levy a tax of three mills for five years for the purpose of having a better school. The town authorities issued bonds to pay for the purchase of a brick building from the Methodist Conference College, paying \$4000. This building was on the property now occupied by the Melon Patch Theater. A marker has been thoughtfully placed there to commemorate this school. With the election of J.H. Fulks as principal, two assistants and two grade school teachers, the first High School was begun in the K. of P. building and moved to the newly acquired building as soon as it was made ready. To quote from an article written by Mrs. Roach and published in the Leesburg Commercial of 1894, "This marked the most important era in our public school history. Under Prof. Fulks the school flourished greatly and attained a splendid reputation." Classes were taught in arithmetic, higher algebra, grammar, rhetoric, literature, physiology, history physics. botany, logic, zoology, Latin and astronomy,

Mrs. Fulks, in writing for the Leesburg Lake Breezes in 1928, said; "My husband compiled a catalogue and Course of Study based upon those of St. Louis and other cities -- during four years of strenuous effort he organized the entire school upon a higher footing, stressing special up-to-date primary methods, delighting arithmetic pupils with the method of analysis, and encouraging thorough scholarship in all grades." A letter from County Supt. J.C. Compton infers (rest missing)

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Ames apartments 119 Euclid Avenue

Barden, J.E.

Bauknight's store (owned by

Compton, J.C. John C.: County Supt. of Schools for 22 years

Cunningham, J.R. James R "Jim" Sep 1832 - aft 1910; on school board 1889-1909

Daniels, J.W.

Dodd, W.C. William C. b c1831-32 Tenn

Duncan, Miss Ollie (Mrs. E. Johnson)

Elks Lodge

Fulks, J.H.

Fulks, Mrs.

Gaines, Miss Nannie (afterward a missionary to China)

Garrett, man

Hocker, Mrs. W.A.

Hocker, W.A.

Humphries, Miss Theda

Jones, J.S.

K. of P. Building old above the present location of Heiskell's store.

Kennedy, Wm. T.

Lees, J.W.

Leesburg Lake Breezes in 1928

Livingston, Miss Nellie

Masonic Lodge

McCormac, J.A.

McEaddy, Mrs. Mollie grandmother of Sandy Pike.

Melon Patch Theater

Methodist Conference College

Milam, Mrs. Ben

Miller, Miss Lizzie

Miller, Mrs. C.V. mother of A.L. Miller

Perkins, Col. J.W.

Roach, Mrs. Indiana

Robinson, P.H.

Simmons, Mrs. J.K.

Skeen, Nelle E.

Spicer, Mrs. Lucy

Summerall, C.P. later *General* Summerall, later President of Citadel.

Summerall, W.B.

Sumter, W.J.

WCTU Building during the year 1885.

Waterman, H.J,

and by the Summeralls.