



The Glade Community Historical Society, Inc.

Including Glade, Garfield & Pine Log, Arkansas

A 501 (c)(3) Charity

GCHS Newsletter #3, 2024

The purpose of the society is to preserve the histories of our communities by researching and gathering stories, documents and artifacts.

Plan to attend our next meeting at Coal Gap School and Glade Museum on July 28, 2024, at 2 pm. Music will be provided by John Rainone and refreshments will be served!

Homecoming

A search revealed Andrew J. Wilks was postmaster in Garfield in 1887, according to Handling the Mail in Benton County Arkansas, George H. Phillips. Garfield Schools opened in 1888 according to Goodspeed's History of Benton County 1889. It has been recognized as the longest continuous operating school in Arkansas. The school bell in front of the building has been in use since the beginning. Its first high school class graduated in 1904. One room was added to the second floor in 1920-21 for increased number of students. By 1932 there were 12 grades.

The school building was remodeled in 1942. Native limestone was hauled by farm trucks from nearby areas and the stone was cut on the site. Hot lunches began in 1942. The first school bus was engineered, from an old truck, by John Spiker. It was green, the color of the Garfield Wildcats at that time.

Through the years, nine rural one-room school districts consolidated with Garfield. They were Liberty 1928; Fairview 1929; Providence 1931; Walnut Hill 1943; Pine Log 1944; Clantonville 1945; Ozark 1947; Corinth 1947 and Coal Gap 1949. Few remain standing.

Ms. Billie Jines, *Garfield/Pea Ridge Times* editor, spent many hours researching and writing stories of 186 independent school districts that existed in Benton County as public education developed. Her extensive effort provided a record of a time in America when one-room rural community schools, with local school boards, were common. Almost all of those one-room schools, and their former students, have disappeared. Her history survives.

Ms. Jines wrote of major changes to education in rural Arkansas. “In 1949, an Arkansas law required that all school districts without a high school, and at least 350 students, be dissolved and consolidated with some other district. Garfield had two choices. It could petition the county to be annexed to a district of its own choice or it could let the county make the selection.”

She continued, “Garfield chose to be consolidated with Rogers on March 15, 1949. The next fall, grades 10, 11, and 12 of the Garfield school went to Rogers. In 1957, grades 7, 8, and 9 also began attending school in Rogers, leaving those through sixth grade at Garfield.”

And, in 1996, the Garfield community restored a school building, hidden in a forest of vines and brush of nearly 50 years. Some of the remodeling cost was paid with \$40,000 in funds raised to restore the building, and Principal Bobby Vaughn said \$100,000 would be needed to finish the project. The building was finished and became the Dorothy Ross building.

In 1998 Ms. Jines wrote about that restoration. “The Rogers system threatened to start busing still more Garfield grades into Rogers.” She continued, “the people of Garfield and friends of the school were able to thwart this. They restored and remodeled a nearby two-story stone schoolhouse that had been unused for many years...donated labor and money were used.”

Ms. Jines recognized the predicament when she addressed the remodeling of the Ross building. “Today, students from kindergarten through fifth grade can still attend school in Garfield without having to be bused to Rogers. They utilize the restored building, a metal building and the one nearer the highway...” She concluded, “To the best of my knowledge, no one from the Garfield area has ever been elected to the Rogers School Board since Garfield’s consolidation with Rogers.”

But a radical change occurred in 2023 in Arkansas public school education. An Arkansas law created changes in its educational delivery. A voucher program was authorized by the LEARNS Act or Act 237 in 2023. The Rogers School District voted unanimously to close Garfield Elementary School after the 2023-24 school year because of declining enrollment and the high cost of maintaining the building. Rogers owns the Garfield building. Their rezoning plan was to bus Garfield’s 83 students to Tillery Elementary School in Rogers.

Garfield grieved the news and a farewell reunion celebration brought people to the Garfield Elementary School on May 12, 2024. The Garfield Elementary School was in existence

from 1888 until 2024. A large crowd gathered and said farewell to the school, long treasured by the community.

Act 237 quickly changed educational delivery in Arkansas. . By June 1, 2024, 106 private schools were approved in Arkansas including the Garfield Scholars' Academy. The state's educational change allowed Garfield the ability to administer their students for the first time in 75 years.

Two educators, Joy Sawyer and Melanie Kennon spent long hours establishing the Garfield Scholars' Academy at the First Baptist Church in Garfield, Arkansas. The Academy is an open-enrollment charter school independent of the Rogers School district. It will include kindergarten through eighth grade.

Garfield is a wonderful place with a reliable supportive network of people who will assure the Academy's success. Though uncertainty surrounds change, Garfield Scholars' Academy will provide many opportunities for community involvement in its growth and development and the educational future of its children.

GCHS News

Glade Community Historical Society, Inc.: Patricia Heck, President; Judi Walter, Secretary; Ruth Billingsley, Treasurer and board members: Gary Blackburn, and Dorothy Williams. Our deepest appreciation goes to Sam Reynolds who served as Treasurer from 2011-2024.

The GCHS has leased Coal Gap School. With your continued support, we can maintain it for community functions. GCHS annual dues are \$20 per family-Donations are always appreciated! Thank you for helping us save a little history of Northeast Benton County.

GCHS is always looking for new board members, and all are welcome to visit our board meeting on the second Friday of each month at City Hall, Garfield, Arkansas.

Our last meeting of this year will be October 27, 2024. Plan to hear Scott Davis present videos of several local citizens around Garfield. Soon they can be seen on You Tube! A grant from the Benton County Historic Preservation Commission made the videos possible.

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Please attend our July 28, 2024 meeting at 2 pm at Coal Gap School on Slate Gap Road. John Rainone and friends will provide music. Root Beer Floats will be served!