

A HISTORY OF BURLINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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PREFACE

The idea for this project came from Ryan Dittmer, a technology and performing arts teacher at Burlington Elementary School. Ryan understood the importance of documenting the history of the school for future generations of students and hoped a written history could be utilized within the curriculum. I wish to thank Ryan for asking for my help with this project. Although I am originally from the Burlington area, researching and writing this history has afforded me the wonderful opportunity to learn so much more about the area's fascinating history.

There are a few additional people I need to thank for their assistance with this project. Matthew Becher of the Boone County Planning Commission and Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board offered his thoughtful comments and insight. He has such a passion for Boone County's history and I appreciated all of his generous assistance and support. I also wish to thank everyone at the Boone County Public Library Local History Department, especially Bridget Striker and Rosie Carpenter. I could not have even attempted the research needed for this project without the help of these individuals. They offered their expertise and helped me locate much needed reference materials.

I would also like to acknowledge *The Boone County Recorder* and its importance to the research and writing of this project. For almost a century the newspaper wrote on the happenings of the school weekly and sometimes even daily. Without those consistent articles I would never have been able to document the amount of detail included within this history.

In conclusion, I hope this project will be a resource not only to Burlington Elementary School but also to the community. I see this history of the school as fluid. I hope that as it is read by individuals of the community additional information will be offered. Burlington Elementary School has a unique and fascinating history which in many ways can be told best by all those who had the opportunity to be educated or worked within its walls.

Rebecca L. Silva
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RURAL BEGINNINGS: 1882– 1910



Photograph Courtesy of Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board

The history of Burlington Elementary School began in a small, wooden schoolhouse built in the early 1880s well after Burlington had established itself as the county seat of Boone County.¹ This simple building served as the town's first public school and was located on the west side of Orient Street close to where the street was intersected by Burlington Pike.² Until this school was established, the only other option for education in the area had been the Morgan Academy, a private school which opened to students in 1814. The Morgan Academy was located on Bullittsville Road immediately south of the Old Burlington Cemetery until it closed in the 1890s.³ Private schools were common across Boone County during its settlement due to the rural nature of the area which consisted mainly of dense wooded land and farms. Only the wealthy could afford to send their children to these schools because of the cost of tuition as well as the

¹ Conrad, William. **The History of Boone County Schools**. Florence, Kentucky: Boone County Community Education Council, 1982. p.23.

² Becher, Matthew E., Michael D. Rouse, Robert Schrage, and Laurie Wilcox. **Burlington**. [one in the series, "Images of America"], Charleston: Arcadia Publishing. 2004. "D.J. Lake & Co.'s 1883 Atlas of Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties, Kentucky." (pictured) p.2.

³ Ibid. p.41.

ownership of horse and buggies required to provide transportation over the rural countryside.

As rural towns were being settled across the state of Kentucky, it became apparent that there was a growing need for the establishment of a school system. In 1836, the Kentucky General Assembly “passed an Act establishing a Common School System” throughout the state and in 1849 Kentucky counties were mandated to fund public education.⁴ By 1882, over forty public schools had been constructed in Boone County’s rural towns in an effort to provide educational opportunities within walking distance for the area’s children.⁵ Small school houses were now visible across the Boone County landscape.

The new Burlington public school exhibited the type of features common for early schoolhouses. These buildings were typically one-story in height and designed with one or two rooms, rows of three windows on each side of the building for light, a gabled roof and warmed by a central stove.^{6 7} If the school had more than one room, the students would be divided by grade level, otherwise all the students received instruction within one room regardless of age. It was often expected for the older students to assist the teacher and provide instruction to the younger students. Many of these early schools educated grades first through fourth and the school term lasted September through January. Once the school term ended many of the children were expected to help on the local farms. To receive their public education, children had to walk to school on dirt paths some of which were across hilly or rugged terrain. This made the walk to school almost impossible during the winter months, especially for the younger students.

By the 1890s, Burlington’s public school began to be mentioned in the local newspaper *The Boone County Recorder* and was referred to as the Burlington School. The school was recognized in 1896 for receiving a school library award for “exhibiting the best work

⁴ Conrad. p.19.

⁵ Boone County Records, Book N, Page 265, quoted in Conrad, William. **The Top of Kentucky: An Educational and Historical Tour through Northern Boone County** (author: 1985), p. 8.

⁶ Taylor and Taylor Associates, Inc. “Historic and Architectural Resources of the County of Boone, Kentucky, 1789-1950.” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, 2000. On file with Kentucky Heritage Council, Frankfort. Section E. pp. 24-25.

⁷ Norris, Dallas Howard. **The Reorganization of the Boone County School System, Kentucky**. “An Essay Submitted to The Graduate Faculty of the Teachers College of the University of Cincinnati.” Cincinnati, Ohio. 1942. p.18.

at the Teachers' Institute."⁸ The school also began publishing its monthly honor roll to recognize students' academic achievements. In the summer of 1903, the school announced its effort to raise funds to increase the school term to eight months and to secure a teacher for that period of time.⁹ It was common in the nineteenth century for teachers to be hired only for the length of the school term and many traveled from other towns to work at a particular school. While employed by the school they would live at a local boarding house or with a local family. It was expected for teachers to have completed an eighth grade education and pass a required examination.¹⁰ The Burlington School many times announced its efforts in the newspaper to secure the most qualified teachers to provide its students with the best possible education.¹¹



Teacher and Students, Burlington School, 1901
Photograph Courtesy of Boone County Library, Digital Collection

As Burlington entered the twentieth century its public school continued to grow in student size. By 1905, the school reported that 70 students were enrolled for the

⁸ "Political." *The Boone County Recorder*. 9 September 1896, p.1.

⁹ "Local News." *The Boone County Recorder*. June 1903.

¹⁰ Norris. p.18.

¹¹ "Local News." *The Boone County Recorder*. July 1903.

upcoming school term.¹² Other public schools were also growing across Boone County and it became very challenging for one or two teachers to instruct larger numbers of students “up to eleven subjects in only eight hours a day.”¹³ In 1908, the State of Kentucky’s Legislature passed a series of educational reforms which completely changed the existing Boone County school system. The state hoped to create “a better and more adequate school system.”¹⁴ Many counties began merging the small rural public schools into larger entities called consolidated schools to serve larger areas.¹⁵¹⁶ This required the counties to take administrative control of these schools from the rural towns and raise the funds to construct improved school buildings.¹⁷

Also at this time, the idea of attending high school was gaining popularity across the nation as the amount of white collar jobs were increasing, creating opportunities for students to seek employment outside of the family farms. A high school education was no longer viewed as only necessary for those few who could afford a college education but seen as an important educational step as students prepared themselves for life after school and the employment opportunities becoming available. To meet these growing educational needs, the state mandated that each county have at least one or more high schools, one of which to be located at the county seat. These reforms led to a tireless effort on behalf of then Superintendent of Boone County Schools, Edgar C. Riley, to consolidate the county’s many schools and to begin planning a new Boone County High School in Burlington.¹⁸

¹² “Local News.” *The Boone County Recorder*. August 1905.

¹³ Conrad. p.20.

¹⁴ Norris. p.26.

¹⁵ Taylor. Section E, p. 25.

¹⁶ Conrad. p. 20.

¹⁷ Norris. pp.27-30.

¹⁸ “Fiscal Court.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 1911.

BOONE COUNTY'S FIRST HIGH SCHOOL: 1910-1938



Photograph Courtesy of the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board

In March of 1910, it was announced in *The Boone County Recorder* that the county had purchased a site for the new school east of North Orient Street at a cost of \$1,066.00 and construction would be completed as soon as possible. The site was “ten and two-thirds acres in size” and was located “east of and adjoining the town of Burlington.”¹⁹ The article went on to explain that the Board of Education was going to sell about one-half of the land to bring the cost down to around six hundred dollars. Burlington School Principal Professor Everett L. Dix described the design for the new school as follows:

“...Plans for the new building are complete. It will be a two-story brick structure heated by furnace. Library and laboratory rooms with proper equipment will supplement the regular class room work. The campus is ideal – in location, size and formation. Here, in pleasant, airy rooms and commodious halls, in the center of a campus on which the flowers bloom, shade trees wave and birds sing, and that surrounded by the most beautiful hills and groves the sun shines on, you can pursue your higher education. The classic atmosphere that such conditions create is half an education in itself...”²⁰

¹⁹ “Boone County High School.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 16 March 1910, p.1.

²⁰ Dix, Everett L. “A Personal Letter.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 1910.

A lot of attention was given to the new county high school not only by school officials but also by the community. Professor Dix began appealing to the citizens of Boone County to consider a high school education rather than completing their education with the eighth grade, the current length of the common school system. Professor Dix wanted to impress upon the people of Burlington that the world was changing and additional education was now needed for young people to be successful. The following letter was written by Professor Dix and appeared in *The Boone County Recorder* in 1911:

“Parent, you can’t give your child anything that will be worth as much to him as an education. The Boone County High School is free to the boys and girls of Boone County. Surely you should do your part and help your child take advantage of this opportunity.

Don’t send your child away to school until after graduation from your County High School. Keep him near you and among your own people as long as you can. You do not know what his surroundings may be in some distant school.

Send for a catalog of the Boone County High School. Our course is as strong as that of any school of similar grade in the state.

Do you know that the High School graduate has an earning capacity twice as great as the common school graduate? Do you know that an education is worth more to a boy or girl than a farm?”²¹

The school officially opened to its students on Monday, January 30, 1911.²² This new building housed grades first through twelfth under one roof. The high school classes were held in the two rooms on the second floor, with the primary and secondary classes held in the two rooms on the first floor.²³ There was also a basement and a room in the attic which was often used as a gymnasium.²⁴ The building was constructed of brick, raised on a stone foundation and capped by a hipped roof. Since the area surrounding the high school was still very rural and no transportation was provided by the school, some students had to travel quite a distance by horse and buggy to receive their education. Only the children who could easily walk to the school or who came from families who could afford transportation or room and board in town were initially able to attend.²⁵

²¹ Dix, Everett L. “Commencement Exercises.” *The Boone County Recorder*. January 1911.

²² . “Forty Years Ago.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 25 January 1951.

²³ Becher, Rouse and Schrage. p .41.

²⁴ “Burlington School.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 8 September 1914.

²⁵ Norris, Dallas Howard. p.22.

It is very probable that the new school was built by George Nicholson, a very prolific contractor from the Walton area who is credited with constructing numerous public and private buildings across the Northern Kentucky area during this time. In 1902 he had constructed the Walton Graded School which was very similar in design to the new Burlington school.²⁶ It had also been noted in *The Boone County Recorder* on two separate occasions that Nicholson had visited Burlington in preparation of submitting a bid to construct the new high school in Burlington.²⁷

Superintendent Riley and Professor Dix held a small ceremony on opening day to give encouragement to the students and assure them that they would receive the best possible education at this new and impressive building.²⁸ There was a lot of pride over the new high school not only by the school administration but also by the community. The education this school would provide was viewed as “second to none in the State and one of which the county will be proud.”²⁹ Professor Dix felt that a strong relationship between the high school and the people of the county was imperative. He stated “..we have a country High School whose most important interest is really the improvement of country life conditions, the foremost item being the proper education of country people.”³⁰

Burlington High School offered traditional academic classes as well as agriculture and domestic science classes. These classes were meant to better prepare the students for the roles of country life they would be settling into after graduation. Seed testing, milk testing, stock breeding, sewing and cooking were all subjects taught. Professor Dix also opened the doors of the school on a regular basis throughout the year for demonstrations and forums to offer help and guidance in these areas to the people of the county. In 1912, Professor Dix reported that the students had tested over one thousand ears of corn for the community and it was now common for him to spend many hours a day “explaining seed testing and milk testing and similar things to the farmers who came in to the High School building.”³¹ When Professor Dix left his position at the school in 1914 he was credited with setting-up a “County Experiment Station” and for teaching “Agriculture as it should be taught.”³²

²⁶ “Walton Graded School.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 1903.

²⁷ “Local Happenings.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 1910.

²⁸ “Boone County High School: Now Occupies Its New and Commodious Building At Burlington, Of Which It Took Possession Last Monday.” *The Boone County Recorder*. February 1911.

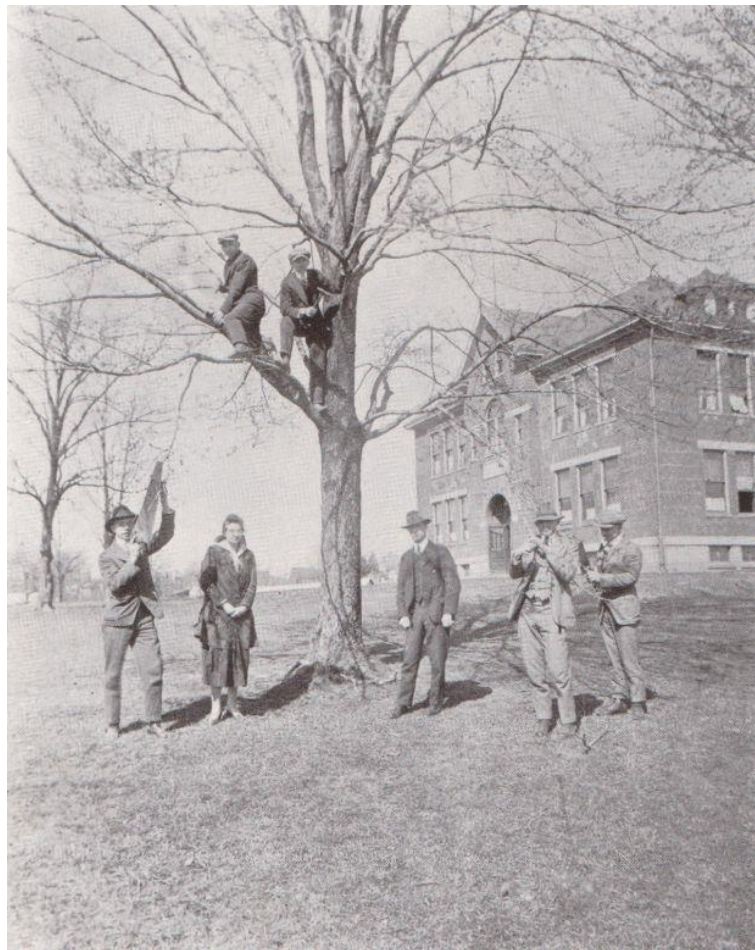
²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Dix, Everett L. “The School and Community Life.” *The Boone County Recorder*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² “Burlington School.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 8 September 1914, p.1.

By 1914, several high schools had been established throughout the Northern Kentucky area. Boone County had four additional high schools which operated out of the existing small rural schools in Union, Belleview, Florence and Hamilton.³³ The high schools had begun competing against each other in regular academic and athletic competitions. In June of 1914 Burlington hosted the Northern Kentucky Tournament, a competition which challenged the students in the areas of studies (education and music), exhibits and athletics. Eight high schools participated with Burlington being declared the winner.³⁴ Burlington also participated in an annual high school spelling competition. According to Burlington's 1916 yearbook the school had already won both the 1914 and 1915 competitions.



Agriculture Class, Burlington High School, 1917

Photograph Courtesy of the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board

³³ Conrad. p.20.

³⁴ "Successful Tournament." *The Boone County Recorder*. June, 1914.



Sewing Class, Burlington High School, 1917

Photograph Courtesy of the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board



Girls' Basketball Team, Burlington High School, 1915

Photograph Courtesy of Boone County Library/Digital Collection

The school had established several clubs by 1915. The 1915-1916 yearbook featured photographs of an agricultural club, manual training (woodworking) club, sewing club and a domestic science club. The school also had a baseball team, a girls' and boys' basketball team and a track team.³⁵ A baseball field was located directly behind the school and baseball games received regular attention in *The Boone County Recorder*. The high school presented an annual Christmas program and held celebrations for both Halloween and Arbor Day.

Burlington High School continued to grow in student size into the 1920s. The school reported in 1922 that the upcoming school year would have the largest student body to date, an increase of forty percent from the previous school year.³⁶ The Boone County Board of Education announced in 1925, it was accepting bids to construct an auditorium/gymnasium addition onto the school in which one-fourth of the cost would be paid for by the Parent Teachers Association (PTA).^{37 38} The addition was anticipated to be completed by the end of the year and construction was underway in October by contractor George Nicholson.³⁹ He was the only contractor to submit a bid for the project.⁴⁰

By 1926, the school had consolidated with four of the small one-room rural schools which were located in close proximity to Burlington.⁴¹ The consolidation led to the county providing transportation to the high school for the first time since these new students would have to travel a longer distance to attend the public school. Two men were given a contract to transport the students in vehicles they furnished. These early buses could only transport up to 25 students and were described as "model "T" Ford trucks, with narrow bodies, only wide enough for two rows of seats, one on either side."⁴² The 1920s also brought several modern improvements to Burlington High School. In 1927, school lunches were served to the students. Until that time the students had brought their lunches to school. And in 1929, the school installed water fountains.⁴³

³⁵ Boone County High School Yearbook, 1915-1916.

³⁶ "School Bells Ringing." *The Boone County Recorder*. 7 September 1922, p.1.

³⁷ "Notice." *The Boone County Recorder*. 9 July 1925.

³⁸ "Bids are Received for New Addition." *The Boone County Recorder*. 16 July 1925, p.1.

³⁹ "Personals." *The Boone County Recorder*. 1 October 1925, p.5.

⁴⁰ "Boone County School Board Met Saturday." *The Boone County Recorder*. 4 June 1925, p.1.

⁴¹ Norris. p.60.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Cabot and Rouse. p.31.



School Bus Transporting Burlington Students in 1940

Photograph Courtesy of Burlington Elementary School

School activities continued to play a central role for Burlington throughout the 1930s. The school participated in regular academic tournaments, spelling competitions, public speaking competitions and debates, and many times hosted these events at the school. The students of the school had established several additional clubs including a 4-H club, glee club, pep club, public speaking and debating club. Two community service clubs were also created, the boy's HI-Y Club and the Girl's Reserve Club.⁴⁴ In 1937, several students began writing and printing a Burlington High School newspaper.⁴⁵ Athletics continued to be very popular with the boys' basketball team the "Tomcats" and the girls' basketball team the "Kittens" receiving a lot of support from the community. The school also offered baseball, softball, volleyball, ping pong and even tennis when the students transformed the gymnasium into a tennis court after basketball season.⁴⁶

In addition to athletics and clubs, the school offered art, music and theatre to its students and the community. Class plays and musical recitals were presented annually by the upper classmen. Art, drawing, sand and clay modeling were available to the elementary and secondary classes.⁴⁷ In 1936, Burlington High School hosted a live radio

⁴⁴ "Burlington School Notes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 10 January 1935, p.1.

⁴⁵ "Burlington School News." *The Boone County Recorder*. 14 October 1937.

⁴⁶ "Burlington School Notes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 12 April 1934, p.1.

⁴⁷ "Burlington School News." *The Boone County Recorder*. 22 November 1934.

broadcast on local station WCKY of musical performances by students from Burlington, Florence and New Haven schools. The students participating from Burlington ranged from fifth to twelfth grades and they were selected to open the program.⁴⁸ In 1927, the school hosted a live radio performance by Gene Ruppe and His Smoky Mountain Ridge Runners in the school's auditorium. The price of admission was advertised as "15 and 25 cents."⁴⁹

Agriculture and home economics continued to be a strong focus of Burlington High School in the '30s. Many students were active in the school and county's 4-H clubs and activities and competed in the agriculture and home economics contests locally, in Lexington and at the Kentucky State Fair in Louisville. They also participated in competitions by the University Extension Department of the University of Kentucky. The annual 4-H Spring Rally led by the 4-H and Utopia Council was held on the school grounds for many years. This popular event was a get together of Boone County 4-H leaders, officers and members to discuss 4-H issues and hold demonstrations and contests.⁵⁰ In 1939, the seventh annual Boone County 4-H and Utopia Fair, was held at the school. It was advertised to be the largest to date and offered exhibits of farm and home equipment, a picnic, displays of club member's projects, gate prizes, musical entertainment, rides and swings.⁵¹ This event was held on the school grounds for several years. Also in 1939, a "talking picture show," "Under the 4-H Flag" took place at Burlington High School. The movie was an adaptation of the novel and the program was to offer a movie short titled "Hidden Values" as well as a cartoon comedy. The program was free to the community but was part of an attendance contest being held county-wide to increase interest in the growing 4-H movement. The school with the highest attendance would receive \$1,000 to go towards 4-H activities.⁵²

In 1934, the school added a girl's Physical Education class when several female students purchased material featuring the school colors and sewed their own gym clothes at a cost of forty cents. The school felt the addition of this class was a modern improvement to its existing physical education program and would contribute to the health and "gracefulness" of its female students.⁵³ The new program consisted of exercises and drills choreographed to music.

⁴⁸ "Local Schools in Broadcast." *The Boone County Recorder*. 25 November 1936, p.1.

⁴⁹ "Advertisement." *The Boone County Recorder*. 9 December 1937.

⁵⁰ "4-H Rally Day Plans Being Made." *The Boone County Recorder*. 15, April 1937, p.1.

⁵¹ "Home Exhibits to be Feature of 4-H and Utopia Club Fair to be held at Burlington School Grounds, August 26th." *The Boone County Recorder*. 10 August 1939, p.1.

⁵² "Picture Show to be Given June 22." *The Boone County Recorder*. 15 June 1939, p.1.

⁵³ "Burlington School Notes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 15 November 1934.



Teacher and Students of Burlington High School
Photograph Courtesy of Boone County Library, Digital Collection

The school received a lot of support from the parents of the community through its Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Mother's Club. Both groups organized events at the school especially at the holidays. The Mother's Club organized an annual Halloween celebration, which by 1937 included a "parade in costume, music, the Cake Walk, and guessing who was who."⁵⁴ The school also enjoyed a Thanksgiving celebration. All of the class rooms were decorated and the first graders enjoyed decorating the school windows each year with their colored cut-outs.⁵⁵ Grades first through sixth would also present a program for the season.⁵⁶ The school continued to host Christmas celebrations which included a school pageant.

One of the greatest improvements for the school during this time was the growth of its library. By 1930, Burlington had only acquired around 100 books, most of which were at the high school or college level. Not much thought had been given countywide to providing books for the elementary and secondary school students. The superintendent began an effort to grow the school libraries. A library committee was formed and a

⁵⁴ "Halloween Party a Success." *The Boone County Recorder*. 4 November 1937, p.1.

⁵⁵ "Burlington School Notes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 19 November 1936.

⁵⁶ "Burlington School Notes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 22 November 1934.

library fund of \$150.00 was initially established to purchase appropriate books for the elementary and secondary grades. This amount was grown over time through other sources such as donations and a popular subscription contest with *The Boone County Recorder*.⁵⁷ By 1942, it was reported that Burlington had accumulated over 1,200 books for its library.⁵⁸

On Tuesday, March 2, 1937 at 8:47 in the morning an earthquake shook parts of Northern Kentucky. Burlington High School was evacuated during the quake which due to several aftershocks was reported to last ten minutes.⁵⁹ Initially, it was reported there was no damage to the school but over time signs began to appear that the structure had suffered. In 1938, it was announced that a new building was to be constructed due to the current building's severely deteriorated condition which was described as follows:

"The old building, erected in 1910, has been unsafe for some time, as the walls have divided and the entire structure weakened. The old building was examined by experts sometime ago, and was found to be in such condition that it was beyond repair and would have to be condemned for school purposes."⁶⁰



Burlington High School Showing Signs of Deterioration

Photograph Courtesy of the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board

⁵⁷ "School Drive Subscriptions to Recorder starts Monday: Helps Local School Libraries; Prizes." *The Boone County Recorder*. 19 January 1935, p.1.

⁵⁸ Norris. pp.79-84.

⁵⁹ "Earthquake Felt in Sections of County." *The Boone County Recorder*. 4 March 1937, p.1.

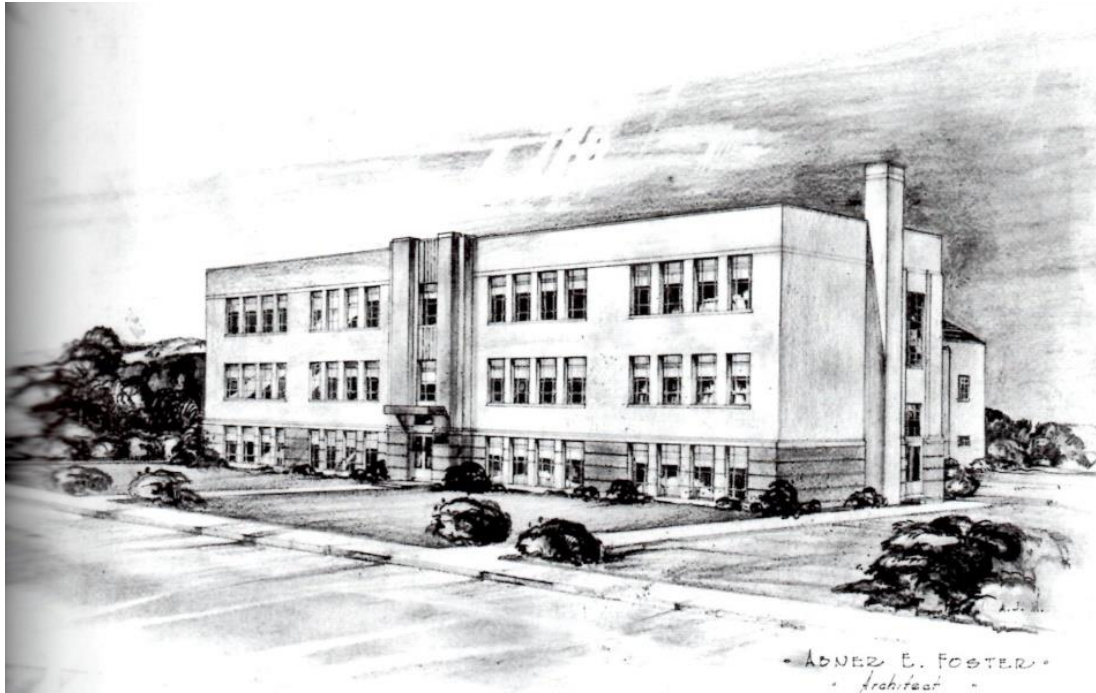
⁶⁰ "School Building for Burlington." *The Boone County Recorder*. 2 November 1938, p.1.

The new school building was to be partially funded by a Public Works Administration (PWA) grant. The PWA was part of the New Deal programs initiated under Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression of the 1930s to put the country's unemployed back to work and make improvements to the country's infrastructure. This program was very large in scope, responsible for constructing over 34,000 projects between 1933 and 1939. Many projects completed under the PWA program included dams, bridges and aircraft carriers. It is also reported that this program is responsible for seventy percent of the new schools constructed during this time period.⁶¹ The total cost of the new Burlington school building was \$81,550, with fifty-five percent covered by bonds issued through the Boone County Fiscal Court.⁶² The remaining forty-five percent was covered by the PWA grant.

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Works_Administration

⁶² Becher, Rouse, Schrage and Wilcox. p.45.

A MODERN SCHOOL: 1939-Present



Photograph Courtesy of the Boone County Historic Preservation Review Board

Construction of the new building began in January 1939 west of and behind the original Burlington High School building at its current location of 5946 North Orient Street. Architect Abner E. Foster had been retained to design the new building and chose the Art Moderne style for its design. Art Moderne was a popular style for public buildings at the time and especially for buildings constructed during the New Deal period. These buildings typically have a symmetrical, rectangular design and a horizontal emphasis with a smooth wall surface, projecting concrete surround entrances and a flat roof, usually with coping at the roof line. The architect described his design for the new school in an article he wrote for the *Boone County Recorder* in 1939. The following is an excerpt from his description:

“GYMNASIUM – The gymnasium of this building, which is also used as an auditorium, is 54’ wide by 70’6” long and accommodates the basketball playing floor 40’ wide by 64’ long. From the floor to the bottom of the trusses is a clear height of 18’ which is ample for the average long shot, since you consider that between these trusses at the center of the floor the clear ceiling height is 25’. A spectator’s balcony is provided for basketball games or any other athletic events, which will seat approximately 150

persons, and bleachers seats can be arranged on the stage which will seat and additional 75 persons. Under the balcony it will possible to provide seats for at least 100 more spectators, which would make a total of 325 seats. The total seating capacity of the entire auditorium – and balcony would be approximately 850 persons, which I am quite sure would be more than ample to accommodate any affair that might be contemplated at Burlington. The floor is maple 1 inch thick and is treated with three coats of penetrating seal which gives a durable and beautiful finish. The ceiling of the auditorium is covered with an insulation and sound absorbing material 1 inch thick in large sheets 4 feet wide and 8 feet long. Ample provision has been made for the safety and convenience of students and spectators with sufficient entrances and exits, either directly outside or connecting to fireproof corridors. Boys' and girls' dressing rooms, with ample toilet and shower facilities, are provided with direct success to gymnasium. Large windows on both North and South ends of this room will give sufficient day light; and at night and on extremely dark days artificial lighting is taken care of by a sufficient number of drop lights suspended from ball and socket brackets in ceiling. These fixtures will swing in the event they are hit by a basketball. Rigid regulation size basketball rings and back stops make this a complete gymnasium, and the acoustic properties of the ceiling as well as the seating arrangement for vision, in addition to the glazed tile walls gives us a complete gymnasium and auditorium with low maintenance cost second to none in Northern Kentucky.

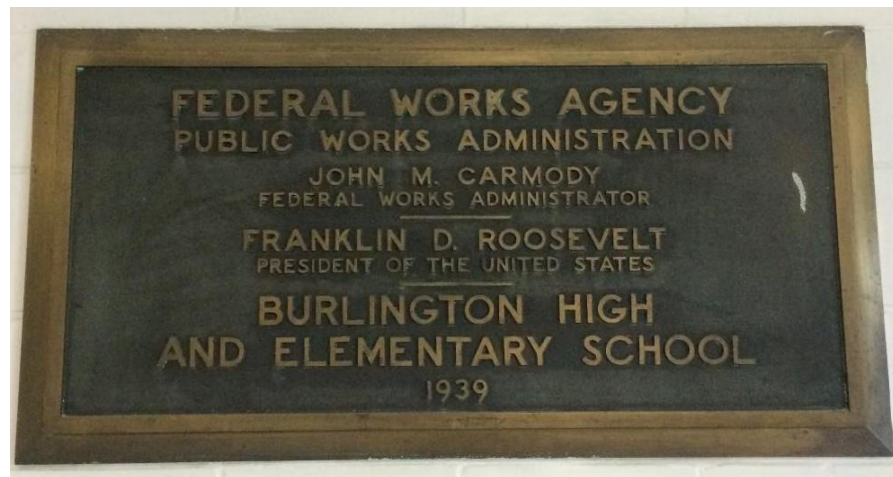
CLASS ROOMS – The class rooms for the elementary grades and high schools grades are each 21 feet wide and 28½ feet long, with four large windows to each room, 4 feet wide and 7 feet high. The floors are maple treated with three coats of penetrating seal; the walls, and finish plaster and ceilings covered with rigid insulation board which is slightly sound absorbing with a high degree of light reflection. Black boards of the proper height for the specific grade for which each class room is intended cover the North and East walls, along with ample space for bulletin boards composed of cork. The large windows of each class room produce approximately twice as much square footage of glass area as is required by the State law, and each class room will seat comfortably about thirty pupils.

CORRIDORS – Ground floor, first floor, and second floor corridors have concrete floors and steel stairs, with cement fill treads and lands at each end of the corridor. The walls of the corridors as well as stairways and landings are glazed tile up to a height of 7 feet 6 inches. The concrete floors are covered with asphalt tile 12 inches square in an alternating pattern of browns and tans, with a brown border. All lockers in corridors are recessed in walls and are raised 8 inches above the floor. These fireproof corridors and stairways assure at all times the safety of egress to all occupants of this building.

ADMINISTRATION – The principal's office is located above the ground floor vestibule

on the front of the building, directly in the center. Windows are provided to give the principal complete supervision of the front entrance, stairways and main part of the first floor corridor. Ample closet space has been provided for storage in principal's office. Directly above principal's office is the library, which is connected to the science room by means of a book window. The science room will also be used as a reading room or study hall."⁶³

Walton contractor George Nicholson carried out the construction of the new building, and the electric work was completed by the Poston Bros. of Burlington.⁶⁴ The Superintendent and Board of Education had hoped the new school building would have been completed by September 11, 1939, the first day of the new school year, but due to bad weather which affected construction for several weeks, and the need to install all of the desks, seats and other necessary equipment, the new Burlington High School was delayed in opening its doors to students until Monday, September 25, 1939.⁶⁵ Superintendent Norris and Reverend R. Lee James held a small talk on opening day with the 228 students enrolled (first grade 22; second grade 22; third grade 21; fourth grade 24; fifth grade 14; sixth grade 18; seventh grade 27; eighth grade 20; ninth grade 15; tenth grade 18; eleventh grade 17; and twelfth grade 10.)⁶⁶



PWA Plaque Located in the Central Foyer and Stairwell of the 1939 Burlington School Building

It was said in *The Boone County Recorder* that the, "citizens of Burlington and surrounding territory are proud of this new structure, which is one of the most modern

⁶³ "Architect's Description of New Burlington School." *The Boone County Recorder*. 2 November 1939.

⁶⁴ "Contracts Let for New School." *The Boone County Recorder*. 22 December 1938, p.1.

⁶⁵ "Opening Date to be Sept. 18." *The Boone County Recorder*. 7 September 1939, p.1.

⁶⁶ "Burlington School Opens with 228 Enrolled." *The Boone County Recorder*. 28 September 1939, p.1.

and beautiful schools in the county.”⁶⁷ In 1941, the school’s PTA planned a day of beautification for the community to aid in the donation and planting of trees and shrubs around the new building.⁶⁸ The new school was also immediately utilized by the community for various events and programs such as 4-H banquets, home economic demonstrations and classes, political dinners, Boy Scout of America meetings⁶⁹, and fundraisers by the Burlington Volunteer Fire Department and the Boone County Fish and Game Club.⁷⁰ In 1943, the school also provided the setting for the first ever Farm Bureau banquet in Boone County. The president of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation was the guest speaker and all farmers in the county whether members or not were invited to attend with their families.⁷¹



Burlington High School, circa 1940

Photograph Courtesy of Arlene Jones

⁶⁷ “Opening Date to be Sept. 18.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 7 September 1939, p.1.

⁶⁸ “Grounds to be Beautified.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 27 March 1941, p.1.

⁶⁹ “Scout Committee Hold Meeting at Florence Tuesday.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 29 February 1940, p.1.

⁷⁰ “Large Number in Attendance.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 29 March 29, 1947, p.1.

⁷¹ “Farm Bureau Banquet Planned.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 18 February 1943, p.1.

The original high school building continued to be useful for community meetings and programs. Then in May of 1940 it was announced that it would be demolished with the 1925 auditorium addition retained for use as a storage building.⁷² Any usable school materials were placed in other schools with the remaining materials sold at a public auction of school property held Saturday, November 20, 1943.⁷³

Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, academic and club activities were very prominent at Burlington High School. The school continued to host various academic competitions including spelling bees, debates and public speaking. A few additional clubs were founded including a Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter, a Future Homemakers of America (FHA) chapter, a Rifle Club and a Journalism Club. In 1941, the school organized its first band which included: trumpets, cornets, clarinets, trombones, a baritone horn, saxophones, a bass drum and field drums.⁷⁴ The band's first public concert was held in August of 1942 after receiving their new uniforms.⁷⁵ The band offered an annual spring concert for many years as well as special occasion concerts throughout the year.⁷⁶



Future Farmers of America Chapter, Burlington High School, 1948
Photograph Courtesy of the Burlington Elementary School

⁷² "Old Burlington School Building Being Razed." *The Boone County Recorder*. 2 May 1940, p.1.

⁷³ "Sale of School Property." *The Boone County Recorder*. 11 November 1943.

⁷⁴ "Burlington School Band is Organized." *The Boone County Recorder*. 30 October 1941.

⁷⁵ "Local School Band Makes First Appearance In New Uniforms." *The Boone County Recorder*. 6 August 1942, p.1.

⁷⁶ "Burlington School Band will Present Concert." *The Boone County Recorder*. 20 April 1944, p.1.

At the beginning of the school year in 1940, the school made the decision to change its mascots from the Tomcats and Kittens to the Eagles. By the opening game of its basketball season in October, all athletic teams were referred to as the Burlington Eagles.⁷⁷ Athletics continued to be very popular with the students of the high school during the 1940s and 50s. Some of the most popular sports included basketball, baseball, cheerleading and football. In 1949, Burlington won the state football championship with a team of only six players. The team had been undefeated all season.⁷⁸ Track and field events were also prominent at the school and became popular with both the male and female students. In 1952, Burlington High School hosted the Boone County Conference Track and Field Meet. Five schools attended and competed in multiple events.⁷⁹ And in 1949, the school received a new scoreboard for its gymnasium which was donated by several local businesses.⁸⁰

During these years, the high school continued to feature annual celebrations organized by the PTA and students. The Halloween celebration was the most popular and received regular recognition in *The Boone County Recorder*. In 1952, the PTA changed this annual event to a Fall Festival celebration held in late November. The event featured “supper, exhibits, contests, booths, entertainment and prizes.”⁸¹ The school also played host to several community events. In 1952, a Wild West show was set-up on the school grounds and free to the public. The event featured Cleve LaRue and his show of horse tricks and cowboy acts.⁸² In 1953, the fourth, fifth and sixth grades sponsored a circus which was held in the school’s gymnasium on Friday, November 6th at 8:00 p.m. The cost to attend was 25 cents and the circus featured a camel, acrobatics and a grand finale.⁸³ Also in 1953, the school hosted an annual free school program featuring some of the Cincinnati area’s most well-known radio and television personalities as well as several other entertainment acts.⁸⁴

In 1943, the school lost its principal to serve in the Army during World War II. Edwin Walton had been the principal at Burlington High School for five years when he left for

⁷⁷ “Burlington Notes.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 31 October 1940.

⁷⁸ “In Breakfast Battle.” *Lexington Leader*, 8 November 1949.

⁷⁹ “Track and Field Meet Scheduled Tuesday, May 6th.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 24 April 1952, p.1.

⁸⁰ “Thanks Extended for Scoreboard at Burlington School Gymnasium.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 20 January 1949, p.1.

⁸¹ “Burlington P.T.A. will Sponsor Fall Festival Nov. 22nd.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 30 October 1952, p.1.

⁸² “It’s a Circus. It’s a Wild West Show.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 12 June 1952.

⁸³ “Circus Planned at Burlington School.” *The Boone County Recorder*. 5 November 1953.

⁸⁴ “Free Program Feb. 23 at Burlington Gym; Stars to Appear.” *The Boone County Recorder – The Boone County School News*. January 1953, p.1.

basic training at Camp Bowie in Texas on Thursday, February 4th.⁸⁵ ⁸⁶ He served overseas for twenty months before returning home. He had been promoted to the rank of sergeant and had earned the nickname "Skeets."⁸⁷ He returned to his position as principal at Burlington High School until his retirement in 1954.

A monumental change happened for Burlington High School in the early 1950s. The Boone County high schools located in Burlington, Florence, Hebron and New Haven had become overcrowded and a need was recognized by the Boone County Board of Education to expand its school system.⁸⁸ In 1950, it was announced that the Boone County Fiscal Court had agreed to act as a holding company to issue the bonds needed to fund a new high school building.⁸⁹ By 1952, a twenty-five acre tract of land was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Oliver on Price Pike in Florence as a site for the building's construction.⁹⁰ The building was going to be of a modern design, two-stories, and made-up of the materials brick, concrete and steel. Superintendent H.N. Ockerman announced that once the new high school was completed the original four high schools would be converted into elementary schools to help alleviate the overcrowding of elementary students the county was currently experiencing.⁹¹

On Tuesday, September 14, 1954, the new Boone County High School opened its doors to students with an enrollment of 515.⁹² Burlington High School had been renamed Burlington Graded School and it opened that fall with an enrollment of 301 students in grades first through eighth, with eight teachers on staff.⁹³ As Boone County's population continued to grow at a fast pace into the 1960s, the county was obligated to continue the expansion of its school system. The next twenty years saw the construction of several additional high schools, junior high schools and elementary schools.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ "Burlington Principal Leaves for Army Today." *The Boone County Recorder*. 4 February 1943, p.1.

⁸⁶ "With our Boys in Service." *The Boone County Recorder*. 25 February 1943.

⁸⁷ "S-Sgt "Skeets" Walton Returns from Pacific." *The Boone County Recorder*. 22 November 1945.

⁸⁸ Conrad. p.21.

⁸⁹ "Boone Fiscal Court Agrees to Act As Holding Company." *The Boone County Recorder*. 5 October 1950, p.1.

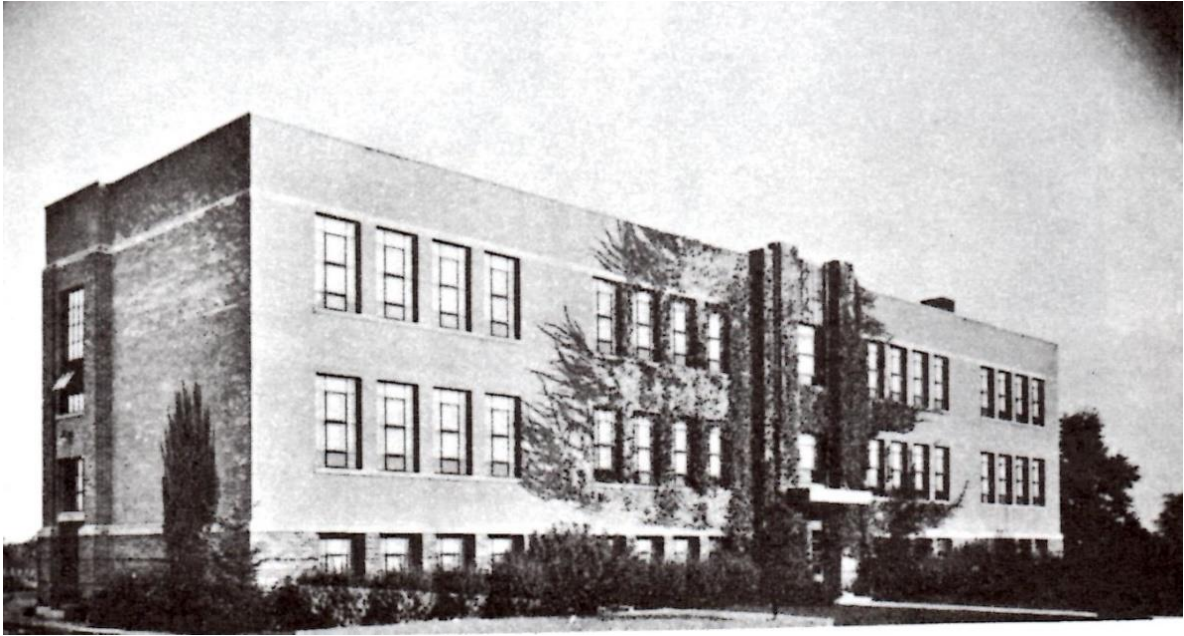
⁹⁰ Conrad. p.21.

⁹¹ "Bids for New High School Building to be Received June 10." *The Boone County Recorder*. 15 May 1952, p.1.

⁹² "Florence." *The Walton Advertiser*. 9 September 1954, p.5.

⁹³ Conrad. p.21.

⁹⁴ Ibid.



Burlington Graded School
Photograph Courtesy of Burlington Elementary School

By 1963, the Burlington school was officially known as Burlington Elementary School due to the construction of Conner Junior High School and the reorganization of its student body. The school now housed grades first through sixth. Throughout the late twentieth century the student population of Burlington Elementary School continued to expand prompting the county to construct additions onto the existing 1939 building. The first addition began in 1969 and consisted of three rooms added to the rear of the structure.⁹⁵ A large second addition to the building was completed in 1980. This addition reoriented the main entrance of the school to the north side of the building and added a new library and a block of classrooms. This addition currently houses all of the administration offices in place of the library which was moved to its current location on the second floor. A third addition was completed in 2001 on the south side of the building. This addition was designed by the architecture firm of Robert Ehmet Hayes and Associates and constructed by Endeavor Construction Company. The addition included another block of classrooms as well as a cafeteria and gymnasium.

⁹⁵ "Boone County Prospects for 1969." *The Boone County Recorder*. 9 January 1969.



Construction of 2001 Addition
Photograph Courtesy of Jim Alexander



South Elevation of Burlington Elementary with 1969 and 2001 Additions Visible
Photograph Courtesy of Jim Alexander

There have also been several additional changes and improvements since Burlington solely became an elementary school. In 1969, the school hired its first librarian to organize the school's library according to library science standards. By 1995, the school's library had been digitized making Burlington the first school in the county to have such a system.⁹⁶ In the 1970's the school added kindergarten classes, making the school a kindergarten through sixth grade school until the county reorganized the school system in the 1990s shifting the grades so the elementary schools only housed kindergarten through fifth grade. A new playground was added to the east side of the building in the 70s, which is the same location as the current playground. Parking lots have also been added to the property to aid in school bus circulation as well as staff and visitor parking. And a greenhouse was added to the property to add horticulture to the school's curriculum.



Construction of Burlington Elementary School's Playground in the 1970s

Photograph Courtesy of Burlington Elementary School

Burlington Elementary continues to offer many of its traditional programs such as academic competitions, art and music programs, Halloween and holiday celebrations, and the athletic opportunities of basketball and cheerleading. Home Economics and 4-H activities are still practiced within the 4th and 5th grades. New additions to the school's curriculum include a Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) program, a

⁹⁶Burlington Elementary School – Written by Students and Compiled by Burlington PTA. "Oral History Interview with Verna Lee Hickey Bruce." **Look at Our Yesterdays: Burlington Hometown.** Mt. Vernon: Windmill Publication, Inc.,1997. pp.25-26.

world language program and a technology program. And a very popular club established at the school is the Recyclones, a recycling program promoting environmental awareness to the students.

The history of Burlington Elementary School spans over one hundred years and represents the evolution of the Boone County school system as it progressed from one room public school houses to modern school buildings offering higher education opportunities. The school's place within the community has always been prominent whether it was performing its most important purpose of educating children or offering agricultural forums to farmers, opening its door for 4'H meetings, radio broadcasts, community group meetings/fundraisers, athletic competitions, or holiday programs. And although the school building itself has evolved over the last few decades, the school's rich history is still visible as one walks through the its hallways and sees the 1939 architecture of the original building, photographs of Burlington High School graduates displaying the names of some of the area's most influential citizens and hundreds of athletic and academic trophies displayed in various trophy cases from decades past.

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