

## **BERNICE JOHNSTON**

Bernice Johnston was born in Herculaneum, Missouri in December of 1914. She attended the Herculaneum Public School District and graduated from HHS in 1932; this was quite an accomplishment during the Great Depression. Plus, she was Valedictorian of her graduating class of 16.

Upon graduation from high school, Ms. Johnston attended Southeast Missouri State College and Business College. In 1936, she returned to Herculaneum as a district secretary. She served as the Secretary to the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools and would continue to do so for the next 45 years. During her 45 years of service, Ms. Johnston worked for four superintendents, including two who are now in the Blackcat Hall of Fame. In this position, Ms. Johnston attended over 500 board of education meetings and countless county superintendent meetings. Ms. Johnston didn't drive an automobile; she lived near the school and would walk to work. Superintendent Gastineau would drive her to and from the board meetings as he didn't want her walking at night.

Ms. Johnston chaperoned many of the senior educational trips and always handled all correspondence and finances for the trips. She assisted with the trip planning, food, lodging, and transportation. In 1957, the Blackcat yearbook was dedicated to Ms. Johnston and her sister, Dorothy Kincaid, also a district secretary, in recognition of their service to the school district.

Ms. Johnston served for many years as the Secretary for the Herculaneum Alumni Association. Following the Christmas Day fire of 1947 that destroyed the single public school building, Ms. Johnston was instrumental in raising funds to assist with the construction of the new high school building. The Alumni Association raised funds to buy library books, classroom equipment and to restore/replace several paintings for the new high school building.

Ms. Johnston was a longtime member of the First Baptist Church of Herculaneum where she served as the church pianist. She also volunteered for many years as a librarian at the Herculaneum Memorial Public Library as well as being a member of the service organization of Herculaneum Joli Coeur Club.

Ms. Johnston retired from the Herculaneum (Dunklin) R-5 District in 1981. She truly devoted her life to the school district! After retirement, Ms. Johnston traveled extensively and eventually moved to Columbia, Missouri, where she now resides.