

Schools, 1987

CITRUS COUNTY SCHOOLS

THE FIRST CENTURY

1987-1987

roy mays

may 20, 1987

CITRUS COUNTY  
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS  
1887-1987

Eugene A. Harrison 1887-1897

C.S. Young 1897-1901

R.L. Turner 1901-1915

H.J.Dame 1915-1921

Jesse Montague 1921-1933

I.R. Nolan 1933-1945

Roger Weaver 1945-1956

Harry K. Buie 1956-1965

James McCall 1965-1968

Roger Weaver 1968-1984

Carl Austin 1985-

Before there was a Citrus County, there was a school system.

When the county was formed, Aug. 1, 1887, education was going on, schools were being built and tax money, little as it was, paid salaries of teachers.

Generally, at first, it had been a loose-knit school system relying on itinerant teachers who visited the county and taught among the widely scattered families for several months then went on their way.

The first formal schools, widely scattered one room wooden buildings, came about at least as early as the 1880s.

There was a school in Ozello in 1880 and one at Homosassa about 1882. Both were built on islands in the days before wooden bridges linked communities in the coastal region with the mainland.

Floral City built its first school in 1883 while Stage Pond and Mannfield schools were also erected during that decade.

Little in the way of written records is found today about the early days of the school system. The first record book of School Board meetings has yet to be found either in the possession of the school system or Citrus County offices.

This much is known; Eugene A. Harrison was the first school superintendent serving during the first decade of the new county's existence from 1887 until 1897. His other claim to fame was ownership of The Citrus County Star newspaper.

Teachers, depending on the type of certificate they held, earned \$25, \$30 or \$35 a month.

The first board meetings were conducted at the county seat of Mannfield.

In the first year, at their meeting of Aug. 8, the Board established permanent schools, 33 of them.

Those schools were listed, along with their "supervisors" as Mannfield Academy (George Edwards), Sunnyside (H.B. King), Lecanto (J.W. Johns),

Fairmont (O.P. Keller), Crystal River (W.H. Espey), Red Level (J.S. Winn), Citronelle (E.W. Priest), Lakeside (C.L. Moore), Arlington (V.B. Van Ness), Tompkinsville (L.C. Catton), Ft. Cooper (G.J. Boswell), Pleasant Grove (R.F. Mountain), Rose Hill (H.C. Ridgeway), Russell Hill (B.N. Mayo), Shady Grove (J.T. Landrum), Oakdale (C.D. Nickerson), South Island (C.S. Lyles), Bay View (J.F. Head), South Dunnellon (C.J. Williams), Cove Bend (Joseph Robertson), Pine City (J.J. Field), Halls River (E.B. Morton), Lakeview (F.W. Ross), Centre Hill (J.M. Young), Cedar Grove (J.W. Smith), Hunter's Home (J.J. Wilson), New Hope (R.B. Waller), Crystal River colored (J.A. Shaw), Lee's Mount (Charles Lundy), Freedom (J.A. Kitchen), Homosassa (F.M. Lamon).

Special schools were established at Melrose Neighborhood (James Harding) and Normal Park (S.W. Leffler).

The School Board came before the newly formed County Commission 17 days after the formation of Citrus County.

It happened on Aug. 17 during a joint meeting of commissioners from Pasco, Hernando and Citrus in Brooksville.

At that meeting, according to County Commission records, Board members "reported that it would be impossible to determine the amount of indebtedness of school fund proper until the end of the scholastic year on account of contracts entered into prior to the division of the county."

The Commissioners ordered the Board to settle the school fund at the end of the scholastic year with public funds divided according to a prorate established for the three counties.

Once that was done, the portion which went to Citrus amounted to 26.2 percent of the total available for education in the three counties or some \$2,114.84. In contrast, Pasco received 40.4 percent of those funds with Hernando receiving 33.4 percent.

Shortly after the beginning of the new decade, at the Board meeting of Sept. 30, 1891, the Board adopted its annual budget of \$6,254.20.

There were 30 white and three colored schools at the time. The board

employed 31 teachers for the white schools, three for the colored.

Enrollment neared 600 students with 522 in the white schools, 75 in colored schools.

At mid-decade, according to County Commission records of a Sept. 2, 1895 meeting, the county told the Board to move.

"On motion of J.H. Geroch, seconded by J.W. Johns, the School Board is hereby requested to vacate the Jury Room now occupied by them and move their office and effects into the office located in front of the court room in the west end of the Court House and the Sheriff is required to keep court room locked and all windows closed down."

After that, the board rented its space from the county.

The first record of that in the Commission minutes of July 8, 1896, reads "\$10 paid to H. Barco for School Board room for May and June 1896".

In those days the county reviewed the financial records of the School Board.

Two commissioners reported on Feb. 2, 1897 that they had inspected the books of the School Board "and the committee reported that they found the books kept in a nice and businesslike manner."

From 1899 onward, School Board records are complete.

Those records are contained in eight large, heavy, hardbacked logbooks kept in the present school administration building in Inverness.

The first entry in book one was handwritten of activities at a meeting two days before Christmas 1899.

C.S. Young was superintendent, had been for some two years, and made \$600 a year. J.W. Knight was chairman of the three member School Board.

The county seat was in Inverness. The board still shared space with the county government in the court house.

White teachers were paid an average \$30 a month, some earned as high as \$40 and others as low as \$25.

The total in the budget for teacher pay was \$840.

At that first recorded meeting, Knight was late but board member Bennett Wornock was at his seat. The third board member was not mentioned.

Chief business on hand was "a letter was read from Superintendent Russell of Hernando County declining to accept the terms offered by the Board of Public Instruction of Citrus County for cooperation of the two counties in a county line school on Russell Hill."

The board decided school would be adjourned for Christmas.

And the meeting was over.

School Board meetings of the era, at least as reflected in the minutes, were short and to the point. Generally the written minutes of at least two, sometimes three, meetings could be recorded on a single page in the record books.

Young himself, who would serve one of the shortest tenures of any school superintendent, was founder of the long vanished town of Orleans and served as postmaster. A Civil War veteran, Young had been born in South Carolina and studied for the ministry before coming to Citrus in 1883. Two years later he would bring his family to Orleans.

The new year dawned and with it a new century.

The board found itself with cash on hand of \$330.98. For the year 1900 the state would give Citrus \$295 for public education.

It was enough though. The school year lasted just five months.

The number of schools, more even than today, is not surprising. Transportation was poor. The county was more community oriented then. Schools were generally one room, one teacher, and located wherever and whenever there were enough students to warrant a school.

Sometimes the number of students dropped and townspeople wanted to combine schools.

"A petition was presented by patrons of Rose Hill, Shady Grove and Pleasant Grove schools praying that those schools be consolidated and a

school building be erected in some central location." School Board minutes Aug. 6, 1900.

There were pros and cons on the matter. "C.A. Moore appeared in opposition to it. M. Dick and J.C. Priest presented statements in favor."

The board decided it was in the best interest of the students to consolidate the schools and appointed a committee to locate a central site for the combined facility.

Schools were a community affair not only in that they could be created down the end of any road for a handful of students but far into the new century were largely controlled by their own elected trustees who reported to the school board. There were special taxing districts for each school and special elections called for individual districts to elect new trustees or set new property tax levies.

Cost of new schools was nominal. In September of 1900 the board reported the school at Citronelle was completed. Cost was \$525.

"J.D. Spooner made complaint and presented claims for damage on account of some of his hogs having been drowned in an open cistern at an abandoned school building near Anita." School Board minutes Oct. 1, 1900.

The matter was resolved.

Spooner was allowed to take material from the old school building in compensation for his loss.

Supt. Young retired at the first of the new year, 1901, and was replaced by R.L. Turner who had been elected superintendent.

He took his seat, along with board members C.A. Miller, M.F. Dick and J.E. Westbrook, Jan. 8 of that year.

Turner had been born in South Dunnellon in 1872 and was a teacher by profession having attended a Normal School at Jasper and Stetson University.

Teachers, the Board noted, were to be tested in June and September.

Tightfisted with a dollar? Some today might think so if they reviewed

the minutes of June 3, 1901.

"The board refused to screen the door and windows of the Homosassa school house as asked for by the patrons."

Actually the move was taken, according to the board, "contending it to be an unsafe precedent."

A precedent, perhaps, but also something that might have to be repeated for all Citrus County schools. And there were still plenty of them- 24 in number.

The names harken to a bygone era of small towns, many of which, like the schools which served them, no longer exist.

At the turn of the century there were schools for white children in Ft. Cooper, Floral City, Cove Bend, New Hope, Rose Hill, Pleasant Grove, Shady Grove, Allen Hammock, Sunny Side, Lecanto, Vianna, Fairmount, Crystal River, Red Level, Sulphur Springs, Citronelle, Hartshorn and Hernando.

Colored schools were located at Inverness, Floral City, Russell Hill, Crystal River, Hernando and Lee's Mount.

If pay for teachers was low, so were taxes though the School Board did ask the County Commission in 1901 not to reduce the 4.5 mill levy but raise it to 5 mills.

The Board was urging teachers to get their certificates "as we place a premium on certificates as a stimulus to higher education."

New schools were built, old ones sold. The Halls' River school house went for \$6 on Oct. 7, 1901- the only bid.

At the beginning of the new year, 1902, enrollment in Citrus County was 119. Getting students to attend school was another matter. Average attendance was only 63.

What were students reading then? The Board had approved "Our Little Book for Little Folks" as students' first reader and "Baird's Graded Work in Arithmetic" as the math book for first through third grades.

Crystal River students were offered high school courses starting in

1902 when the Board authorized their introduction at the Crystal River School to "afford the pupils the same opportunity as accorded at the Inverness High School."

Out of zone transfers, while causing administrators and principals headaches today, were a matter of critical concern at the turn of the century when the loss of a single pupil could mean the closing of a school for lack of enough students.

On Sept. 7, 1903, T.C. Cato was permitted to attend the Inverness school for the present term as long as the school he had been attending had enough students without him to remain open.

In May of 1907 a new school house was approved for Floral City "as long as it does not cost more than \$1,800." It ended up costing \$2,265. The old building was sold to the Masonic Lodge.

When it came to taxes, rifts sometimes occurred between the School Board and County Commission. In 1906, the county refused a recommendation of the board to levy a six mill tax.

That caused problems.

"Therefore the Board declared a five month term."

Teachers had to accept the same salary as the previous year and Supt. Turner "officially refused the raise in his salary as established by the Clerk's Office."

"A letter was read from the teacher of Crystal River Colored School asking for heater and flue to be put in the school house. The request was denied all voting no." School Board minutes Nov. 5, 1906.

Growth was not a problem at the beginning of the century. As the 1908-09 school term ended in June, the Board noted "For lack of sufficient reasons, new schools are not created for 1909-10."

But while there were enough schools, there were sometimes personnel problems as noted in the Jan. 3, 1910 minutes.

"Supt. Turner received charges against the principal of the Hernando

School Professor T.M. Brownlee on Dec. 8, 1909", visited the school and found the charges "well taken and true."

Just what the charges were remain lost to history. It is enough to say the principal was suspended, the school closed, and Professor Brownlee's certificate was revoked and he was discharged.

The school did not stay closed. The Board hired Professor (all principals apparently were called professor in those days) J.T. Bushoy and school reopened Jan. 3.

In March, the Board accepted the completed Homosassa Elementary at a cost of \$525 and added \$15 for a belfry which was contracted for later.

The matter of a principal for Hernando was scarcely settled when the Board was beset with the choice of a principal for Floral City School.

It seems the trustees of that school wanted Professor D.L. Stanfield and defended their position when appearing before the Board.

But "some few citizens" were not entirely satisfied and "protested against the appointment" of Stanfield. They wanted a Professor Hagey to be appointed.

"They also presented a spurious petition which was ruled out of the consideration."

Board member M.F. Dick moved that Hagey be appointed but received no seconding vote.

Then "at this juncture, Mr. Dick had to catch his train."

The two remaining Board members, J.M. Young and C.A. Miller, then voted to instruct the superintendent to notify Stanfield that he would be appointed principal "as long as the trustees approved, otherwise Stanfield would not be appointed."

The trustees were duly notified of the Board's action and told they could request a second nomination or leave the matter entirely to the Board.

On Aug. 1, 1910, Supt. Turner notified the Board he had picked Professor

W.C. Finney as of July 18 to be principal of Floral City High School.

Hernando trustees wanted a new school so on April 3, 1911, the Board set out to organize plans for the new building expected to cost \$1,325 and also planned for a brick school building in Inverness. Two months later the Inverness trustees came to the Board and pledged \$5,000 for the new brick school.

The county and School Board came to another fork in the road of their off-again, on-again relationship in August 1911.

The county was building a new courthouse in Inverness (now the old structure on Courthouse Square) to replace the earlier wooden building.

But no one bothered to consult the School Board about room for them in the new building.

In August, "after examining the plans" the Board found itself and the superintendent assigned to two small offices and "that the accommodation is wholly inadequate. The space allotted allows no vault or place for the records and no place to store the large amount of school books."

And worse, "there is no place for the monthly meetings of the Board."

How the matter was resolved is not a concern of School Board records. Be assured the matter was worked out for the Board would stay in the courthouse for a half century more with their offices located just inside on the left of the western Main Street entrance- space now occupied by State Rep. Dick Locke. (322)

In the meantime plans for the brick school house in Inverness, the building now owned by Citrus Memorial Hospital across from the present Inverness Primary School, were going ahead. W.B. Talley was the architect and on Oct. 11, 1911, the contract went to Winston Brothers of Inverness for \$12,760.

Turner's tenure as superintendent was coming to a close. He announced his retirement in August and Jan. 5, 1915, H.J. Dame took office.

Dame, appointed by Gov. Park Trammell, had been born in Clinch County,

Ga., in 1883 and came to Inverness to practice law in 1913. He also served as county attorney for two years, had taught school in Georgia and for a time was mayor of a small Georgia town.

New programs were being offered for students. In April 1917, the superintendent was instructed "to investigate the practicability of establishing a Department of Domestic Science in Inverness, Floral City and Crystal River and having a teacher for the three schools."

In 1917, the value of all school property was given as \$47,430. At the close of the decade, there were 19 schools in Citrus County.

On Feb. 2, 1920, M.F. Dick died. He had served 16 years "and not missed a single meeting notes a black bordered page in the Board minutes.

Sam J. Rooks took his place April 5.

The year 1921 marked another change in superintendents.

Dame stepped down and Jesse Montague became superintendent.

It was a peaceful transition.

Dame was the Notary Public when Montague was sworn in. Dame was appointed School Board attorney for six months at a salary of \$20 per month. He was also named to fill the vacancy as a trustee in school district 3 when I.O. Fender stepped down.

Fender, by the way, had just been elected to the School Board.

Montague had been a teacher before stepping into the superintendent's job. His wife, Ruby, was also a teacher, would become a principal at Homosassa School, and play a key role in the Montague administration in the early days of the Great Depression.

But in 1921 there was no Depression. Times were good.

The Board divided the school year into two semesters of 16 weeks each. Exams were set at the end of each semester and students had to average 75 percent in each subject to pass. Students who maintained an average of 90 percent or above were exempt from the exam.

"The chairman and superintendant were directed to get the best prices

and terms on school desks as they are badly needed in some of the schools." School Board minutes Oct. 3, 1922.

Just how closely the boards and political offices of Citrus County were interwoven back then is noted by action of the Board New Year's Day, 1923.

In a resolution the Board noted that Sheriff B.O. Bowden had also served as game warden during hunting seasons of 1921, 22 and 23.

The Board asked Rep. Frederick Van Roy and Sen. J.M. Mitchell "to introduce and have passed a local bill in the Legislature authorizing, directing and empling either the school board or county commission to pay the sheriff for his services rendered."

The resolution passed unanimously. By a Special Act of the 1923 Legislature, hunting license fees earmarked for the School Board went to Sheriff Bowden.

Childhood illnesses now considered routine, were grounds for Board action in 1924.

"Since measles have such a widespread hold on the pupils of the Homosassa School, the Board approved and confirmed the action of the trustees of said school closing down said school on the third of March for one week."

At a special meeting Aug. 8, 1924, the Board accepted the new Crystal River High School and drew a warrant for \$4,349 to pay the contractor. A week later they accpeted a bid for \$299 for a 12-foot addition to the Ozello School for labor and materials.

But they didn't pay for the painting at Ozello. That bid was turned down "as there was not enough money in the General School Fund...to pay for the painting."

As today, there was a teachers' association in 1924 and on Nov. 22 they held a a special meeting with the School Board. The association "was highly pleased to have the Board members present and made request that both trustees (of the various schools) and Board members be encouraged to

became members of the association"

In December 1924, "J.A. Perryman, trustee of Lecanto School, came before the Board relative to the Diphtheria situation in the Lecanto Community School." The Board called in a doctor who was employed "to take charge of the situation and get same under control."

As mentioned before, times were good and teacher salaries were improving in the Roaring 20s.

Those with four years of Normal or college were paid \$95 monthly, with two years college \$85 a month. At the low end of the pay scale were teachers with a grammar school education who received \$60 a month.

But there were supplements. An additional \$3 a month went to teachers for each year they taught up to four and if they stayed three years in a row in Citrus County they got an extra \$5 a month. There was \$4 a month extra for teachers who taught two grades, \$8 for those with three grades and \$12 for those who taught four or more grades.

"Should Citrus County School Board employ an attendance officer? What should be done about the health program started last year? How to get better cooperation between teachers, trustees and the School Board."

Those were the questions topping the list for the meeting of June 23, 1925.

They were solved easily enough.

It was "too expensive to hire an attendance officer for the small number of pupils who attend school so irregularly." (The first truant officer would not be hired until 1951). Citrus County was asked to provide a traveling nurse for at least four months a year and the superintendent and a Board member "gave some helpful discussion on the importance of cooperation between teachers, patrons and school officials."

During that summer, the Board became worried about what was happening to its property.

They were informed that "school books and other school property has

So they passed a resolution authorizing teachers to regularly inspect books and require pupils to pay for damage.

New schools for Floral City and Lecanto were a topic of discussion in March of 1926. Plans called for a \$33,500 school building at Floral City and just under \$30,000 to be spent at Lecanto.

In mid-1926 there were 30 Citrus County schools- 10 colored, 20 white.

It was in January 1927 that a new era in recordkeeping was ushered in. Minutes of Board meetings, so laborously hand written since the beginning, were now typed. The first meeting so recorded was Jan. 4.

In that year, also, the Board adopted a grading scale for students and defined school levels.

Grades one through three were considered primary pupils, 90-100 was an A, 80-90 a B, 70-80 a C and below that was a D-failure.

Youngsters in the fourth through eighth grades were considered elementary students and would pass with a score of 80 or better in their class.

Ninth through 12th graders were in high school. They needed a score of 75 or better to pass.

Mid-way through the Roaring 20s the Florida Boom was on in full force. A new city was planned in the Homosassa area and on Oct. 4, 1928, the School Board voted \$36,000 to erect a new school, housing both grammar and junior high students, in Homosassa. To pay for it, \$42,000 in new bonds were called for. Caldwell Construction Company was low bidder, at \$27,453, for the two-story structure.

Selling bonds was not a new thing for Citrus County schools and would be a habit that would have far reaching impact in the years ahead.

In 1928, the Lecanto School district alone had \$42,000 in outstanding bonds, the most at the time of any district in the county.

Other special taxing districts were not far behind. Floral City had a

Crystal River \$20,000 each.

County taxes for schools ranged from five mills in Inverness to 16 for Homosassa and Lecanto.

But it was not a time for reflection on finances. The 1928 audit showed "records met with the requirement exacted of state auditors" and besides, Homosassa school was ready to open Oct. 1, with three teachers.

Perhaps a sense of warning was raised Nov. 6 of that year when the School Board was notified that The Bank of Homosassa "does not care to serve as school fund depository."

So the Board moved funds to the Bank of Crystal River.

On the other side of the county, meanwhile, The Citizens Bank of Inverness had been forced to close its doors and was now "in hands of state comptroller...a receiver to be appointed."

A resolution by the Board noted that when the bank "failed to continue business, and caused all of the county school funds for current expenses to be tied up for an indefinite period of time."

Into the void, the Citrus County Bank and The Bank of Crystal River agreed to serve as school fund depositories for the rest of calendar year 1928 and "loan sufficient money to the school trustees to pay the teachers month by month for the first three or four months even though there is a somewhat depressed financial condition."

The situation was to get worse. Some \$17,000 in school funds was tied up in the Citizens Bank failure.

Nov. 20 and the Board was called into special session.

"There is not sufficient funds in the general school fund to pay the high school teachers for one month." The Board voted to pay them 50 percent of their monthly salary.

When a sixth grade teacher resigned at Inverness Grammar School, the Board voted to combine sixth and seventh grades.

Property in Lecanto was put up for sale. The Board issued a promissary

At the end of the year the picture grew worse.

Dec. 4, 1928. "Since there is a shortage of school funds for this school year ending June 30, 1929, the School Board instruct the superintendent to make contracts with the teachers for the colored schools for a term of three months. If sufficient money (becomes available) a fourth month is provided."

January 1929 and the Board negotiates a \$30,000 loan from James S. Simmons of Pass-a-Grille, a beach community near St. Petersburg. The total school budget was \$61,684 and \$19,500 was needed to pay off road bond trustee. Teachers also needed to be paid and other bills were due.

The Citrus County Bank, serving as county general fund depository and also for a number of individual school districts, failed.

Board members could not be paid their monthly mileage allowance until a new bank was designated and sufficient tax money deposited.

They were not the only ones who would not be paid.

On Jan. 17, 1929 representatives of the Bank of Homosassa and Bank of Crystal River appeared before the Board.

But they, and the School Board, could not agree on the amount and type of securities to be given by the financial organizations to safeguard school funds.

So Board members told the superintendent to write the Bank of Dunnellon (Marion County) and Hernando State Bank (Hernando County) asking them to make formal application to serve as school fund depository for Citrus County.

Jan. 10, 1929, Citrus County Bank of Inverness closed and 12 days later the Board voted to put its funds in Hernando State Bank in Brooksville which had pledged \$10,000 in U.S. Liberty Loan Bonds or Treasury Certificates as security with the State Comptroller.

The Board also asked the Legislature to allow it to issue up to \$30,000 in bonds to retire the current general fund debt.

In the resolution of that date, the balance sheet showed \$28,000 in uncollected property taxes for the years 1926-27 "and it is most probable that not more than 60 percent of the 1928 taxes will be collected."

When the Bank of Citrus County failed, the board received four, \$1,000 City of Inverness bonds. They were sold Feb. 5 for a badly needed \$3,297.24.

"In view of the terrible financial depression" it was written in the minutes of Feb. 22, 1929, the school term of white grammar schools was cut from eight to seven months provided the trustees of each school were able to maintain the schools for at least half that time.

However that action was later rescinded as long as the teachers contracts provided as least one to two months salary "may be held up until taxes were collected."

And there were more loans.

Ruby Montague, wife of the school superintendent, loaned \$200 at eight percent interest to pay the teachers at Oak Grove school and in May there was a special meeting to refinance outstanding loans.

AT THE TIME THE BOARD HAD \$22,500 WORTH OF PROMISSORY NOTES

outstanding and unpaid. There was \$57,000 in uncollected school taxes for the years 1926, 27 and 28. And \$16,040 worth of special tax school district notes against nine of the 13 special tax school districts were outstanding and uncollected taxes for those districts totaled more than \$69,000.

The Board wanted the Legislature to let it sell time warrants to refinance promissory notes, something then-current law would not permit.

The money was needed, said the Board, to operate schools after July 1, 1929. They also wanted power to levy up to 10 mills for general fund and 10 mills for the special districts.

But people weren't paying what taxes had already been levied and weren't likely to be able to afford the higher levies.

So the superintendent and Board went to Tallahassee to tell their woes to local legislators, Sen. E.J. Irby and Rep. W.B. Moon.

Back home there was more trouble.

The Bank of Crystal River, depository for six of the special school districts in addition to holding other school funds, closed its doors Monday morning, June 10, 1929.

The bank forfeited two, \$1,000 Orange County Road Bonds to the school district, one special tax school bond for \$2,000 and another note for \$860.

At the close of the school year in June, the Board had \$8,831 on hand, against a general fund debt of \$29,500. And as in the previous two years, taxes went uncollected, nearly \$21,000 in 1928.

If the general fund was hit hard by the pre-Depression months, the special taxing districts were also in a bind.

In July 1929 the Lecanto Special Tax District voted to issue \$47,000 in bonds but because of greatly reduced values of taxable property the millage had to be set at 20 mills in order to redeem three \$500 bonds coming due.

River each had \$20,000 in bonds. Homosassa, with \$32,000 in bonds, needed a 24 mill tax rate because two \$1,000 bonds were coming due.

That month also it came time to pay the lender from Pass-a-Grille but when the \$15,500 note came due the "Board is without sufficient funds to pay" and extended the loan for six months.

It also decided to just pay the interest on \$7,000 in notes held by the Citrus County Road Board trustees and not pay one of the notes "since the board might not be able to borrow money sufficient to run the schools during this school year."

In June, the Bank of Crystal River closed its doors.

In October 1929, the month the stock market crash officially ushered in the Great Depression, the School Board authorized the Crystal River Special Tax School District to renew a \$500 promissory note, a \$750 note and a \$1,200 note to W.H. Miller for one year and two \$500 notes for nine months.

In the spring of 1930 the Board was ready to sell assets, some of them in the form of bonds turned over to them by failed banks, to raise cash.

They sold \$7,000 in street paving bonds for \$5,600 representing 80 percent of par value. The \$3,000 in bonds turned over when Citizens folded netted \$2,400 and \$4,000 in street paving bonds held by the Board went for \$3,200.

Still, the Board was concerned about education as well as staying afloat financially.

So it was, in September 1930, that the Board turned its attention "to the embarrassing fact that too many of our high school graduates have been failing in college and that our students have failed to pass scholarship examinations to our own state universities for the past two years."

The board urged teachers to "stress fundamentals reading, English, spelling, arithmetic and algebra. These subjects should be so thoroughly taught that the student may have a practical working knowledge of the

"We regret the tendency of some teachers to give undeserved high grades. Such a practice is deceiving and unfair to pupils, parents and school officials."

Just so there was no bad taste left in anyone's mouth, the Board closed its resolution with the addage that "The above is said in all kindness."

It was perhaps with the same kindness that the Board, in December, told teachers not to get sick.

"On account of serious financial conditions, no more claims for sickness on the part of teachers be filed in the County Superintendent's Office during the remainder of this school year and all teachers are expected to pay for their substitutes directly."

At the beginning of the new year, 1931, I.O. Fenders retired after 25 years with the school system including duties as a high school principal and later as board member.

In his closing comments, Fender noted "The schools have gone through several financial storms...but we have weathered the gales."

But there were more gales, and it would take another decade, before the storm of economic depression was calmed.

The Board on June 29, 1931 noted poor tax collections the past four years.

In 1927 they had expected \$54,350 but received \$51,000.17. The following year collections of \$46,891 fell far short of the \$59,250 expected. In 1929 the Board took in \$43,273 against an expected tax collection of \$59,349. In 1930 the Board expected more than \$70,000 but collected only \$56,046 and \$31,000 of that was from the gas tax. And in 1931, a year in which the Board had hoped for \$51,273 from taxpayers, collections totaled \$39,143, the lowest figure in five years.

The Board took note of teacher salaries.

The average monthly salary in the state for teachers of both races and sexes was \$113.80 for a 154 day school year. In Citrus the average monthly salary was \$97 for a 131 day school year.

The Board went ahead and drew up a budget of \$63,271 for the coming school year 1931-32 and kept their fingers crossed that tax collections would pick up.

But funds were drying up and the board announced that it would follow the lead of the state and was abandoning in March its teacher training program.

In a letter from State School Supt. W.S. Cawthon, the county was told that "The Legislature made no appropriation for continuing the teacher training work in the high schools, hence that work must be abandoned."

Yet that same year the Legislature mandated an eighth month for the school term- eight months at a time Citrus and other counties were finding it hard to fund five, six or seven months.

That move would have increased the proposed Citrus school budget by more than \$20,000, to \$88,401.

In hopes of providing more money to local school districts, the

*legislature also in 1931 took away all gas tax from 112 of 120 schools and*

substituted proceeds from vehicle tag receipts.

In Citrus County, civic organizations began campaigning to encourage people to buy their tags during the first 15 days of December 1931 to give schools the money to pay their teachers.

In October, the Bank of Dunnellon failed.

But students still had to go to school and many were going by bus.

In a notice to transportation bidders in July 1932, the board listed one of the proposed routes.

Remember, this was at a time before many roads in Citrus County were paved, much less named.

"From a point at the forks of the dirt roads near Sumner Beville's place thence over dirt road to clay road thence to place of Joe Barnes thence to Citrus Gardens thence over dirt road to place..."

And all bus drivers winning a contract were expected to have their buses freshly painted and in good repair. They also had to be "equipped with neat and waterproof curtains to keep out rain and cold wind."

In August, the Board told its superintendent to "write all school trustees to buy wood and other fuel for the schools in very limited quantity and only when actually needed."

Borrowing continued.

Ethel Winn remembers those days. She began a long teaching career fresh out of high school in 1932 and taught at the Roschell School near Ozello.

"I had 10 students in the first through eighth grades," Mrs. Winn, now retired and living in Crystal River, recalls. "I and the students came to school by water."

The school, located where the county park is now at the end of the Ozello Road, was reached by school boat rowed by the older boys in the class and, occasionally, help from the teacher.

"We taught everything by the books," Mrs. Winn said. "There were no music teachers & physical education teachers. You taught it all."

older students helped teach the young ones, it was just one big happy family."

Mrs. Winn stayed with the Waddington family (she had five Waddington children in her class of 10 students) during the week and one Sunday was met at the fish house by Mr. Waddington.

There had been a storm that March weekend, "It had started blowing, rained real hard, the school just floated off its blocks," said Mrs. Winn.

"Miz Ethel," Waddington said to her, "you'll have to have a vacation this week while we put the school back on its blocks."

When that school closed because there were too few students, Mrs. Winn taught at Citronelle where she made \$50 a month.

"They were all good students, they came and studied and worked and respected their teacher," she said. "I just enjoyed teaching."

The Board, with little money on hand, gave little support in the way of supplies and with the advent of modern duplicating machines still in the future, Mrs. Winn recalls staying up all night to copy papers to give her students the following day in class.

Mrs. Winn later taught six years at Homosassa School (1938-44) during which time she earned her teaching degree. She would go on to earn a masters from the University of Florida as would her three sisters, all teachers.

Teachers did not need degrees in Citrus then but only a high school education. "You could take a test on the Constitution and if you passed then you got a certificate to teach second grade."

After teaching at Homosassa, Mrs. Winn taught for nine years in Floral City and was later principal at Crystal River Elementary. She retired from the classroom in 1972 though continued as a substitute for seven more years and spent another seven as administrator of the adult education center."

A new superintendent arrived in the midst of Depression.

*J.P. Nidan would hold a variety of posts during his life. He returned to*

becoming school superintendent he had been county agent at the time of the 1929 Medeterrian Fruit Fly invasion of the state. At the advent of World War II, while still superintendent, he would be a member of the draft board and also serve as chairman of the Citrus County Civil Defense.

But in 1933, taxes were on Nolan's mind. They weren't coming in in anywhere near the amount needed to support the school system.

And the revenue the state had hoped would come from sale of tags wasn't enough.

On March 7, 1933 the Board feared because of this it may "not get sufficient money to operate schools for eight months" and "will not be able to borrow money to open schools for the next term."

Schools were directed to close in March.

When delegations from the PTA's petitioned the Board to reconsider that order, school officials stood their ground.

Phil Zellner remembers when the schools closed early in Floral City and what schooling was like in those days in a school with two teachers and eight grades.

"I was one of the few five-year-olds who got to go to some kind of classes," the Floral City native and later member of the School Board remembers. "The teacher tried to make me take a nap, my mother had long before given up on that. They gave gold stars for nap taking and posted them on the board. At the end of the year I didn't have the first one."

In the eighth grade, before going on to school in Inverness, Zellner remembers there were only seven students in his class which included fifth through eight grades.

They went by bus to school then. The driver owned the bus chassis, the School Board owned the body.

"At the end of the school term our driver would pull off the body and used the chassis for other things," said Zellner. Things were done this way to save money. "A chassis and body both cost a lot of money."

*The emphasis is in schools then was basic math, geography, spelling and*

some handwriting.

Discipline was strict. Students who got spankings at school would often find another spanking waiting for them at home, recalls Zellner.

Zellner also remembers when the old Floral City school started falling apart.

The building was a stucco structure with a full basement. It began cracking and splitting apart. "When the wind was strong, the teachers would take us home."

Eventually the building was condemned.

The high school at Inverness was another school building in bad repair during the Depression and "cannot under any circumstances be used for a school building any longer than the end of the present school term..."

The Board asked the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to build a new high school from funds available under the Public Works Administration.

On June 21, 1935 the Board formally applied for the new school and the following month considered purchase of a "10 acre track" for the school from George R. Miller.

The WPA (Works Progress Administration) allocated \$15,000 for the project while the Board said it could raise \$4,000 and hoped to be able to pledge another \$6,000 by May 1936.

Some \$5,000 of that \$6,000 was to be raised by selling Inverness District Bonds held by the Board and pledged to the Race Track Fund. It borrowed another \$1,000 from the Bank of Inverness.

But 1938 saw no end to financial problems.

In May the Board needed \$8,000 to pay teachers and for transportation. Money available from all sources was \$1,416.57.

So they borrowed \$6,000 from the Citrus County Race Track Trust Fund.

In June of 1938 the Board asked the 1939 Legislature to divide the race track funds equally between the county and school system. By August the Board was asking the WPA to build a school in Crystal River and repair the

school at Homosassa.

That year also saw a new teacher come to Homosassa School.

Roger Weaver's first job was in the two-story brick building. There were 37 students in his combined fifth and sixth grade class. The pay was \$80 a month.

"I just walked in the first day and didn't even know who was the principal," Weaver would recall some 46 years later at the time of his retirement as superintendent.

"Back in those days anyone could teach who could pass the state exam."

The school system supplied the books but other supplies came either from the teacher or the parents. Weaver remembers his students sold candy to buy softballs.

Weaver stayed at Homosassa two years and later became principal at Crystal River High, the school from which he had been graduated in 1933. His name will appear often in the history of Citrus County schools.

But through it all the small schools, such as the famed Island school near Ozello, flourished.

Warren Strange remembered that school well and years later, in the early 1980's, recalled in an interview his year at the "Island of Knowledge" which was built in the 1880s and served the community some 60 years.

Each morning in the year 1938, Strange walked half a mile through the hammocks to a small boat and rowed to school.

He wasn't alone. His seven classmates and teacher Cattie Martin also rowed to class. There were no buses to the island school in Ozello.

The trip took an hour in good weather.

The wooden building was heated by a small wood-burning stove in the center of the room. Strange remembers that stove well. "The county paid me \$5 a cord to cut wood."

As with other one room schools in the county, the island school held all

"When it was their turn, each student would go up to a bench in front of the platform where the teacher sat. The rest went about their work. We had very old desks with inkwells."

Water at the school was collected in gutters along the edge of the tine roof and channeled into a cistern where it was stored. At the edge of the baseball diamond behind the school were two outhouses, one for the girls and one for the boys. The concrete bases of those facilities remain today.

During lunch, a favorite pastime of students was fishing at the western end of the island. Electricity was not available and kerosene lanterns provided light for the school. The school was closed in 1943.

Jan. 3, 1939. The local depression was a decade old with no end in sight. The monthly payroll had grown to \$6,500. Only \$2,266.35 was available that month. The board borrowed \$6,500 from the Bank of Inverness at six percent interest.

April 4, 1939. Payroll and expenses had risen that month to \$8,000. Only \$217.58 was on hand.

They borrowed again, month to month, on into 1940.

That year the WPA began work on a new school at Hernando, at an expected cost of \$40,000.

And in January 1941, the Board borrowed another \$7,000 to meet teacher salaries.

Dec. 10, the first Wednesday after Pearl Harbor, the Board noted in a special meeting "that war had been declared". The new school in Hernando had cost \$63,125.

On Dec. 18, the Board borrowed \$6,500 to pay its teachers.

By January, 1943, things were looking a little better. The Board agreed to pay the entire cost of graduation diplomas for students at the two high schools. Up until then, graduates paid part of the expense themselves.

And for teachers, there was a \$10 a month pay hike on April 21. The same increase was voted for the county's bus drivers and janitors.

The salaries were still far from lavish. The schedule for the 1943-44

school year shows high school principals receiving \$260 a month plus an additional \$195 for teaching vocational agriculture.

All Negro teachers were listed at a flat \$75 a month. The superintendent received \$250 a month and Board members pay was \$40 per month.

The home economics instructor was paid \$145 monthly for an eight month contract while the band instructor received \$170 a month. Most white teachers were earning between \$120 and \$160 a month.

Things were looking up and on June 26, 1944, Supt. Nolan could report to the board "financial affairs of the county are in the best shape they have ever been...all current indebtedness against the district and general fund has been paid...money on hand to take care of the few remaining bonds."

And tax collections were up. Some 99 percent of the taxes had been paid for two years running, and race track receipts were up 30 percent over the average and were at their highest level in history.

The county was on a roll.

The Board increased the school year to nine months and on Jan. 2, 1944, a former principal and teacher, Roger Weaver, became superintendent.

War was over in 1945 and "Supt. Weaver reported that a shipment of 100 cases of toilet tissue had been received through the War Assets Administration at a cost of \$1.62 per case plus shipping."

By mid-1947 pay was increased. Teachers received \$270 on the average per month if they had a bachelors degree, \$300 with a masters. Pay for Negro teachers was up to \$210 per month.

And a high school principal. He was paid \$3,900 a year.

The makeup of the School Board underwent a post-war change when the legislature in 1947 added a fourth and fifth member to school boards across the state to correspond to existing county commission districts.

Gov. Millard Caldwell was called on to appoint two members for Citrus

In 1948 a traffic light was installed at Main and Line Streets in Inverness. The Highway Patrol tried to have it taken down two years later but the Board protested. The light remains to this day.

The county was still trying to save money in 1948 and on April 26 voted to discontinue the post of janitor at Lecanto School at the close of the month and "children of said school be used for the work under the supervision of the principal."

A new decade was on hand and the school system was growing.

It was not a time of concern. Prices were low by today's standards and there were contractors aplenty for the school system's business.

On July 25, 1950, the Board approved a bid from Pure Oil to offer gas at a half cent below existing tank wagon prices and oil at 36 cents a gallon.

The board decided in 1951 that it needed help in financial planning for future growth and in July drew up a contract with First Securities Company of Florida "to assist the board in its financing of needed public improvements." The contract was for nine months.

It was also a year for the first truant officer.

Years before the School Board had decided truancy wasn't bad enough to warrant such a drastic measure as hiring a truant officer.

By 1951 it was.

There was also a law passed by the Legislature that every county should have a truant officer. So in September, 1951, the School Board hired one. She was paid \$200 a month. Half came from the Board, the other from the juvenile court.

Her name was Maude Van Dusen (then Maude St. John).

And her first case involved a group of island children who should be attending Crystal River schools- but weren't.

She remembers that first case even now.

"The principal looked at me and said he 'never thought you would be mean enough to be a truant officer'."

*Indeed prior to her appointment Mrs. St. John had been executive*

Office Depot

director of religious education for a group of 51 churches in Rochester, New York.

Undaunted by the lack of faith of the principal, she set out to find a boat to take her to Buzzard Island.

"I had to find out how to get to Buzzard Island first," she recalled. "I went to the dock and said I wanted to go to the islands." She purposely didn't say the name of the island because she had been told the children's father worked at the dock.

"A bearded man came up to me and said he had a boat and would take me across."

Half way across she learned he was the father of the children she was looking for.

"We landed at a two plank (wide) dock," she recalls. "I can't walk over water so I got down on my hands and knees and crawled to the land."

There she found a hut almost hidden by the thick woods.

"There was this woman with all these little children. They could have made an elementary school themselves."

She talked to the parents and told them of the new laws requiring children to be schooled and the parents responsible to get the children an education.

"They said they had no way to get to the school but by boat."

So Mrs. St. John went to Supt. Weaver and told him the problem. The School Board got a boat and driver and paid the insurance to transport the youngsters.

"Some of them were tall boys and they had to start in the lower grades."

But all the children she found that day would eventually graduate from Crystal River schools.

She had promised to stay on the job for six months. But that case, her first, decided her "it worthwhile, so I would stick it out a while longer."

*She remained until Dec. 1966 & today lives on -- Gospel Island*

In October of 1953, the Board issued a resolution calling on the state to issue \$296,000 in bonds for Citrus County to be used to build a variety of school buildings including gyms at Inverness, Crystal River and Booker T. Washington schools and additional classrooms at Booker T. Washington and Crystal River.

At the mid-point of the decade, the budget for Citrus County schools was nearing the half million dollar mark. The superintendent was being paid \$6,000 a year and pay for all teachers totaled \$250,000 annually .

Weaver resigned Aug. 27, 1956 to take a job in Hillsborough County. "We shall miss his smiling countenance" the board minutes reflect.

Weaver would be heard from again.

In the meantime, Harry K. Bule became superintendent.

Buie, an Inverness native who earned two degrees from the University of Florida after graduating from Citrus High in 1929, had been principal at Inverness Elementary and was given leave of absence from that post when he took the superintendent's job.

He had not been the first choice for the job. The Board and Democratic Party professionals wanted Paul V. Grannen to be superintendent but Gov. Leroy Collins tapped Buie.

In the first election after his appointment, Buie ran as a write-in candidate defeating Grannen, the Democratic nominee.

The year 1956 had its high and low points. Seventh and eighth grades were moved from Floral City to Inverness for "a better educational opportunity" and Citrus County moved to work out an agreement with Hernando County to provide driver education in the high schools.

But there were problems that October, chiefly with the floors on those two new gyms the county was building at Inverness and Crystal River.

They were buckling and contractors and School Board members were exchanging accusations over whose responsibility it was to fix the floors. The Board said it was the contractor's fault and he, in turn, said the poor drainage at the schools was the reason for the moisture buildup and that caused the floors to buckle.

Despite a five-year guarantee, the general contractor and sub contractor refused to correct the condition.

So the Board notified the bonding company on the job but at the next meeting, no one from the bonding company showed up.

The Board members got tough. They set a Dec. 10 deadline and waited.

Dec. 17 came and the Board decided to delay discussion. A month later, on a motion by Ralph Rooks, the Board moved to sue the general contractor, the flooring subcontractors and the bonding agency "to secure satisfactory replacement of the floors."

The Board offered its own settlement. If the contractors fixed the floors, it would take care of drainage problems.

The issue drug on and July 22 was settled. The Board would dig the ditches, the contractor would replace the floors.

A foundation for education of a different sort was also taking place and it had nothing to do with floors. Citrus wanted a junior college and at that Dec. 17 meeting, when talk of gym floors was over, it passed a resolution "to investigate further the feasibility of a Public Community Junior College in our area."

The following July, the county was designated as an area to be served by a junior college located in Marion County. Eventually it would become Central Florida Community College but that was still several years away.

In the meantime, the Citrus County School Board pledged tax support to the fledgling college program.

Though it was four years after the Brown versus Board of Education decision outlawing segregation, separation of the races in public schools was still being practiced in Citrus and most other Florida counties.

In February of 1958, the board passed a resolution asking support for a "Negro Junior College in Ocala" because "a local survey has been made indicating a high level of interest among Negro citizens of the county for the establishment of a junior college." Such a college, of course, would not be built but that story is still to come- some five years later.

The end of the decade saw teachers salaries at a base of \$3,400 a year if you held a bachelor's degree. Principals received that, plus an extra \$850 a year.

Supt. Bule made \$7,500 a year.

On the Board were Horace Allen Sr. of Lecanto, Richard Kaufman and Jesse R. Thomas of Inverness and Ralph Rooks and Dennis (Gene) Allen of Crystal River.

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from integrity to having a sense of humor.

Bute retired in 1965 after eight and a half years as superintendent and was replaced by James McCall. Walter Bunts and Betty Williams joined the board at that January meeting and Bill Edwards was named board attorney at \$75 a month. Another local attorney, Charles Fitzpatrick offered his services but by a 3-2 vote, Edwards got the job.

Early in 1964, the Cold War caught up with Citrus County.

The Civil Defense Director appeared before the board with a questionnaire, part of the nationwide "Increased Readiness Test" and on Jan. 18 the Board assumed "a deteriorating international situation" and began answering questions. They decided in the event of war, children would be dismissed because "parents have responsibility for their children." Teachers would tell students what was going on. The buses would be refueled and Civil Defense officials were assured that school records are "as safe as they reasonably can be expected to be."

Feb. 23, 1965, the Board would face a real, not make believe, critical situation- compliance with the Civil Rights Bill of 1964.

The Board and superintendent got together and issued a press release "concerning the problems and responsibilities facing the School Board and Superintendent relative to desegregation in the schools of Citrus County."

The law said every school district had to take some action on the government's Interpretation of the law by March 3, 1965.

"The Citrus County School Board could sign Form 441 which means that the school system is practicing desegregation and that the board would immediately comply with the Civil Rights Law" the release said.

"The Citrus County School Board- in good faith- can not sign form 441."

The board could, of course, ignore the March 3 deadline but stood to lose \$40,000 to \$50,000 dollars in Federal funds. More ominous, however, was the threat of a Federal court order to desegregate its school system.

"It seems that the wise and common sense thing to do- in the interest of our people and its school system- is to file a plan of voluntary

compliance."

The vote was unanimous.

March 1, two days before the deadline, Kaufman moved the board adopt a plan for desegregation of Citrus County Schools.

"The fact to face is simple enough," the minutes read. "There has been not an iota of integration of the public school system to this moment."

They chose a plan "we believe will best accomplish the ends of the law without disturbing the high standards we have endeavored to maintain in our school system."

The plan was called "freedom of choice."

The first step was assignment of students in the first three grades for the 1965-66 school year. Parents were permitted to choose the school they wanted for their child as long as conditions of residency, preservation of family unit, available space, economical operation of the schools and availability of transportation were considered.

Additional grades, three at a time, were to be added until all 12 grades were included in the freedom of choice plan. Teachers were to be assigned without regard to race, creed, color or national origin. The same with hiring practices of all employees.

On March 2, 1965, the day before the federal deadline, Citrus County sent a registered letter to State School Supt. Dr. James Campbell with its plan for desegregation.

Later that month the Board was looking at education in a different way. They wanted a vocational education center located in Inverness and told the superintendent to go after funding for one.

Seeing future growth on the horizon, the Board was moving quickly to build new schools. In June Walter Bunts moved to have plans drawn up for a new Crystal River High School to open with an enrollment of 500 and be able to accommodate up to 1,000 students.

Supt. McCall wanted a new elementary school for Inverness and recommended plans for a 735 student facility next to Citrus High.

Plans were also drawn up for another 735 pupil elementary for Crystal River.

While McCall and Board members were planning for new schools, parents at two existing schools were miffed at the superintendent.

Exactly what their concern was is not recorded in the minutes though it had to do with moving students from one school to another. What concerned a special meeting McCall called Sept. 4 was "Our superintendent took it upon himself for two causes of intended action that riled the public," the minutes reflect. The riled public, in turn, riled board members "whether it be right or wrong."

Delegations from Floral City and Hernando came to the Board meeting and in the end Kaufman moved the intended activity be recinded and students would go back to schools they were already attending at the beginning of the school year.

The Board went further saying "no groups of children be moved without the board's approval." The motion passed unanimously.

Strangely enough, the minutes of that meeting are signed neither by the superintendent or the chairman of the School Board- a practice common since the beginning of recorded Board meetings.

1966 brought discussion on a site for the new vocational center and it narrowed to two locations- a 40-acre site owned by the Division of Forestry and a 26-acre parcel Inverness resident John Eden offered to donate to the Board for the technical-vocational school.

The Board clearly wanted the forestry site but admitted "it would take an Act of Congress to get title to the land."

Also that year, the Board sold \$1.5 million in bonds pledged to revenue from race track proceeds and earmarked for new construction.

In addition to the three schools and vocational center, Citrus also moved to establish an Innovative Marine Science Station near Crystal River on a 15-acre tract donated by Suncoast City Inc. The following year it would fund \$104,000 toward the center which today attracts students

from throughout Citrus and surrounding counties to study marine ecology up close.

In December, the Board prepared to hire a director for the new Withlacoochee Vo-tech Center and In January named Crystal River architect Jim Page to design the new building on a tract of land in western Inverness on S.R. 44.

In 1966, Phil Zellner, who at the centennial has served on the School Board longer than any other, was first elected.

He remembers things "had been very stable, no growth, dull probably. Teacher salary had remained the same, there were the same number of school buses as the year before. Then we started to grow."

Those issues of teacher pay and growth would consume much time of the School Board in the years ahead.

But 1967 was not a time to worry.

The Board turned a milestone when it moved out of the courthouse and into a \$42,950 building of its own, the present School Board building, Feb. 28.

Teacher salaries in the mid 60s were no longer set at the discretion of the school superintendent and Board but through collective bargaining with the teachers' association.

And there was trouble brewing in that area.

April 25, 1967, the board chairman read a letter from Albert Varney, president of the Citrus County Classroom Teachers Association saying it "respectfully declines the salary increase voted by the board."

The superintendent had already withdrawn his original \$5,000 annual base salary and substituted an offer of \$5,200. The annual base salary had been \$4,916.

Negotiations were set to continue after "we know what financial resources will be available from the county and state."

But by mid-September, the Board received a letter from then State School Supt. Floyd Christian concerning "Some Suggestions for Dealing

with Mass Resignations of Teachers."

Supt. McCall was confident.

He thought "that the teachers of Citrus County will honor their contract."

However, McCall continued, "in the event resignations are offered to the board, that the board consider and act on each offered resignation separately."

Board member Richard Kaufman put McCall's comments in the form a motion which passed unanimously.

McCall was authorized to prepare a roster of as many people as possible who could "satisfactorilly" teach in case of mass resignations.

"In the event of need" was the watchword.

The board was asked by the teachers association to use schools for the Florida Education Association's Crisis Sunday Oct. 1, 1967.

By a 4-1 vote, they were turned down.

Early in 1968, concern over the impending teacher walkout deepened.

"Several procedures" were outlined by the Board Feb. 17, "which could be followed in the event there is a walkout of teachers Monday morning."

But McCall still did not believe the teachers "would not honor their contract and (I) will continued to believe this until facts prove otherwise."

Board members went ahead with emergency plans to use volunteers in the schools to replace teachers and to enter into temporary contracts with non-certified people to be in the classrooms.

The Board also considered double sessions.

Monday, Feb. 19, schools opened on secheule, but with something missing- nearly five dozen of the teachers.

A special Board meeting was called at 4 p.m. that day. Eight schools were operating regular classes.

Monday and Tuesday were declared holidays for students and planning days for teachers.

Crystal River High had 11 teachers out There were 16 absent at Citrus

High.

McCall authorized double the daily rate of pay, plus mileage, for teachers willing to teach in both high schools and double sessions were approved at both high schools.

That day, Monday, 59 resignations had been received by McCall and in his opinion "These people are in violation of their contract." Board attorney Harold Stephens agreed.

Kaufman tried to sound upbeat in the midst of crisis and asked a letter be written to teachers who honored their contract and the volunteers who reported to work in "the emergency."

Teachers were given an ultimatum: return to the classroom by Wednesday noon. The board called another special meeting that afternoon at 4.

Tuesday, two more resignations were received but eight teachers did return to the classroom.

Wednesday afternoon the Board voted to suspend teachers for violating their contract.

And teachers not reporting to class by Thursday at 9 a.m. would be "guilty of insubordination by reason of willful neglect of duty."

Feb. 27, attorney William Edwards was brought in to help attorney Stephens in the "teacher situation"

"After discussion between Edwards, myself and the Board," wrote McCall, "It is our opinion that the board rescind its earlier action as to suspensions and that each resignation be acted on individually and be accepted with prejudice."

Forty-seven resignations were so accepted. Zellner made the seconding motion of board member Betty Williams, to each resignation.

"It was the darkest hour in my 20 years on the School Board," Zellner recalls now. "I couldn't go to sleep at night."

The use of volunteers wasn't working

March 28 and the teachers who had walked out appeared before the board with a group of citizens "to discuss the teacher crisis."

The board adjourned to executive session and decided teachers could reapply for a job and rehiring would be considered on an individual basis.

There were two points of view on the board, said Zellner. Two members thought they should never be allowed back and two thought they were needed back in the classroom.

"I was the swing vote," said Zellner.

What convinced him was when a school administrator at the time told Zellner "we weren't getting the job done with volunteers. It's not the same as having teachers in the classroom."

Though he thought teachers were "morally obligated to honor their contract", Zellner sided with those who felt the teachers should come back.

The board voted to rehire all the teachers who had left the classroom.

And on July 10, Roger Weaver returned to Citrus County. He would be elected in the primary, McCall would leave office early and then-Gov. Claude Kirk appointed assistant supt. Weaver to the post of superintendent for the remainder of McCall's term.

McCall would become principal at the Floral City School and later director of the Vo-Tech Center.

Returning to his old job, one of the first issues Weaver dealt with was further implementation of the Board's desegregation plan.

"When I came back as superintendent, one of the first things I did was recommend complete integration, do away with colored schools (beginning in early 1969)," Weaver would later recall.

"The board was split on that thing. Some of them didn't want to discontinue Booker T. Washington (now Inverness Middle School). I got a compromise. I would go ahead and integrate Crystal River in January and in August discontinue Booker T. Washington."

problems.

In 1969, there was a problem. The Homosassa school burned and the board moved quickly to place students and find a site for rebuilding the school.

In January 1970 they considered moving the school site to a new location, a 12 acre site, and made plans for selling bricks from the burned building.

In the meantime students were housed in the First Baptist Church and meals were served in the Civic Club of Homosassa.

Despite several offers of land, some free, and support of some members of the Board, the majority decided keep the school where it had been, and buy five additional acres next to the site of the burned school bringing the total land area to 12 acres.

After all, recalls Zellner, the people of Homosassa had built the old school themselves and the morning of the fire I pledged to them we would rebuild the school on this site."

Desegregation had outwardly been going smoothly in Citrus County. In Feb. 1967, Supt. McCall had felt moved to report on the "orderly transition of the desegregation of the faculty in the schools."

But in May of 1970 a delegation from Crystal River High came to discuss racial problems at the school and after lengthy discussion the Board agree to appoint a visiting teacher by the name of Charles Dean "to maintain discipline and keep him there until the end of school."

The year 1970 was also one in which television came to the classroom when the board authorized \$4,000 to Florida West Coast Television Inc. for transmitting programs from WEDU, Tampa's educational television station.

In spite of the dramatic walkout of teachers in 1968 and their subsequent return to the classroom, salaries remained low and in 1973 the base salary was \$6,750.

The early 1970s were years of explosive growth for Citrus County and its school system.

School year 1971-72 saw a 22 percent growth in pupil enrollment. The following year that growth slowed little and student enrollment increased 19 percent and in 1973-74 the number of students increased nine percent.

Was the county ready?

"Lord no. How do you see 22 percent growth coming," said Zellner. "We had kids going to school anywhere you could put chairs."

The new Crystal River high and primary schools helped meet the growth and enabled the school system to pull students out of classes then being held in local churches and old schools buildings.

But the crowding had helped in a way few would have thought.

State educators were toying with the concept of open schools.

With several classes housed in facilities such as gymnasiums to ease the classroom overcrowding, the concept was given an unexpected trial run.

It met with bad reviews.

"Every board meeting we had parents complaining about it," said Zellner.

"But it did us a favor and convinced us not to go ahead with the open school concept."

The early 70s also held the seed of an idea that would bring the focus of the state's educational leaders to Citrus County.

That year the state recommended a new school, a primary school, in the middle of the county.

"We began at that time looking for a site and dickered around two or three years trying to get some of that forest on S.R. 491," Weaver recalled in a 1984 interview prior to his retirement.

The 80 acres of the Withlacoochee State Forest the county sought was

Board member Kaufman, who was in the title insurance business in private life, suggested to the Board that it buy 160 acres in Lecanto.

Zellner recalls that Kaufman convinced the Board that growth would come to that area "and we need to buy land while it's available and plan for that growth."

"He (Kaufman) was very liberal, a fast thinking board member," recalls Zellner. "He was in the business and saw before any of the rest of us saw, that we weren't always going to be a small little county."

The price was \$1,000 an acre, about half what the county expected to pay, and the Board jumped at the chance.

It was land, retired Central Florida Community College president Henry Goodlett described as "just a hill full of scrub oaks and a smattering of pines when I first saw it."

The hill of oaks would bring Weaver, Goodlett and state educational leaders together with a bold idea.

Up until then, Board members had envisioned a primary, middle and high school at the Lecanto site.

Weaver and Goodlett were attending an educational coordinating council meeting when Weaver approached the community college chief and asked if he'd be interested in leasing some 30 to 40 acres for a branch campus.

"I don't know how Mr. Roger came up with that idea," said Zellner, "but it was brilliant. Not only did it give college to our kids, but helped us get funding for something we couldn't afford."

Dr. Goodlett liked the idea but the college didn't have the money.

Weaver then took two of his administrators, vocational and adult education director Glen Wade and director of support services Charles Hayes, and put them to work on a plan for a combined high school and junior college at the site.

In the meantime work was going ahead on the planned Lecanto Primary

Initially, plans called for separate high school and community college at the site and that's the proposal Hayes and Wade took to state leaders.

Weaver recalled "we couldn't get anywhere in Tallahassee."

So a joint use campus was conceived and Citrus officials made an appointment with then education commissioner Ralph Turlington.

"We told him the story," Weaver recalled, "he grabbed the plans, five or six pages, and said 'I'm for it'."

But Tallahassee was having money problems of its own.

The plans then went to then Gov. Bob Graham who managed to come up with a \$160,000 planning grant in 1981 for the Lecanto complex.

For its part, in August 1981 the School board approved a two mill property tax hike which raised some \$2.25 million as local match for the proposed project which by then carried a price tag of \$8 million.

That December, Graham recommended \$4.3 million in the 1982-83 state budget for the joint-use facility and that won approval the following April from the Legislature.

In the meantime, Lecanto Middle School was under construction and opened in 1982.

The 177,000 square foot Lecanto High and branch campus of Central Florida Community College, headed by Dr. Hayes, opened in December 1984, just weeks before Weaver retired.

Weaver, who had served half a century in education, retired Dec. 31, 1984 to be succeeded by Carl Austin.

Ironically, Weaver's well earned retirement would come to a tragic end in 1986 at the hands of a youthful intruder in a Tampa home owned by the former superintendent. Weaver died three days later of wounds received at the hands of the attacker. A memorial service would be held for Weaver in the auditorium of the joint-use facility he helped plan on the grounds of the educational center that bears his name.

educational system as principal of Inverness Primary and just prior to his election serving 12 years under Weaver as director of instruction and personnel.

He would be in office only a month before the first crisis of his administration burst into flame.

In the pre-dawn hours of Feb. 5, 1985, much of Citrus High, the county's largest school, was burning.

Late into the morning firemen were putting out the smoldering ruins and the county was assessing the damage.

Not only was most of the historic older section of the school, a source of pride to generations of the county's civic leaders, gone, but so were books, equipment and some 15 classrooms.

Austin and the administration met with the Board in a special meeting and announced plans to bus students to four schools including Lecanto, the Vo-Tech Center, Inverness Middle and the old Citrus High which had been purchased several years before by Citrus Memorial Hospital.

As with the Homosassa School fire more than a dozen years before, some thought was given to moving to a new site to rebuild Citrus High. But as with the earlier decision involving Homosassa, the burned school was rebuilt bigger and better on the same site at Main and Line Streets in Inverness.

The new Citrus High was ready for students the following year and in September 1986 the county had back to back dedications with the opening of the new high school and across the county the new Citrus Springs Elementary.

In this Centennial year, Zellner took his seat for an unprecedented sixth consecutive term on the School Board, the longest tenure of anyone.

And looking ahead, he sees growth remaining the issue this board and those to come will have to deal with.

behind and it could be we will be three behind. Have you seen the population projections from the University of Florida, 150,000 by 1995.

Today there are just under 10,000 students, nearly double the entire county population at the turn of the century.

The first year's school budget of just over \$6,000 wouldn't pay the cost of providing one day's lunches today and would be considered an insignificant figure in a total budget in excess of \$43 million.

And in place of one room school houses, today's schools are modern facilities that are the workplace for some 650 teacher- about equal to the entire student population of 1891.

In its centennial year, the Citrus County School System can look back on accomplishment and forward to future growth.