

The History of the Seeley Swan High School

In early 1960, a group of concerned parents in the Seeley Lake area published a newspaper pamphlet entitled “Why Not a High School at Seeley Lake?” outlining the need for a local high school. That school would not become a reality until the autumn of 1964, nearly five years later. The day that high school opened was the culmination of a saga that had been in motion some time before the Fact Finding Committee of the Seeley Lake P.T.A. typed the first draft of their pamphlet; and like any saga, there were a number of dramatic hurdles that had to be overcome—at one point, in March 1961, then state Attorney General Forrest H. Anderson even ruled that the building of a branch of the county high school in Seeley was illegal.

However, despite the difficulties over the years, the stakes were such that the committee members were willing to fight through to the end: with the nearest high school being located in Missoula, the majority—estimated by the Committee to be as high as between 75 and 100 percent—of high school aged students were leaving school before their senior year.

As the Committee wrote in their closing summary, using capital letters to express their urgency: THIS TERRIBLE HIGH PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS IS A VERY FRIGHTENING THING TO US. WE DON’T LIKE IT, AND YOU WOULDN’T LIKE IT

ANY ORGANIZATION

wishing information on the proposed Seeley Lake High School please write Seeley Lake High School Committee, giving date and place of meeting and a representative of the group will attend.

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Have Parents any Rights in the education of their
Children?

In the Basic Policies, Section of Suggested
By Laws for PTA. - Article III - Section 4. (P-19)
'64-'68

"This association shall seek neither to direct the
administrative activities of the school nor to
control its policies."

In the 'Objects' of NCP&T

Contradictory.

1- "To promote the welfare of children and youth in
home, school, church, and community.

3-
4. "To bring into closer relation the home and the
school, that parents and teachers may
cooperate intelligently in the training of
the child."

In the Policies they say, hands off whatever
they decide to do with your child and in the
purpose for PTA - The Objects - they say to
Promote the child's welfare in school. Somewhere
in-between these contradicting statements must
lie the intent of the law. My feeling is that,
even though the Powers that be, have decided on
a half-way measure, the parents can't afford
to take the risk.

I have gripes that would fill a book on topics
of education which are directly related to present
accepted practices of school administration.

LI - 9-7781

Montana Parent Teacher Association

February 27, 1959
130 North 3rd
Missoula, Montana

Bernard Wold, Chairman
Seeley Lake PTA Legislative Cmttee
Seeley Lake, Montana

Dear Mr. Wold:

Thank you very much for your most welcome letter of February 25. If I had any doubts about the need for a legislation program statewide and PTA members interest, when I accepted this appointment, I certainly do not have any now. Your letter is indictative of others from all over our grand state. Montana people are on the move, how well we resolve improve-ment of juvenile conditions, schools, courts, and many others, will depend on a mature look at the local level, as you say. We can only work when the people are ready, and you and I will agree they are ready.

Since my appointment in October, all of my time has been consumed by bills of legislation in Helena, organizing county Peabody Conferences, writing articles for the bulletin and becoming a grandmother for the second time. Very little time has been left to really set out a suggested procedure to follow for the state legislation committee to work with the local committees at this time.

My experience so far this session of the legislature leads me to believe that the policy relative to carrying on an overall state program is not well enough understood by the Units so that we can coordinate our efforts for the strength we need. Of course, this constitutes a lot of study for all of us the next two years, to be prepared. We will be issuing a hand book from our committee for you and your committee, to cement understanding of what our responsibilities are. Next, we must get delegates to convention to vote and establish policies with reference to issues, other wise we are stopped short in Helena. We cannot appear in front of committees there without the established policy from Units, personal opinions cannot be used in the name of the PTA. A questionnaire is an opinion poll but does not establish policy. This can only be done in convention.

The bulletin soon to be mailed will carry a brief summary of some of the bills dealing with children and youth. A more complete report will be made as soon as the sessions are over, and can be used as a basis for study of things to come.

Enclosed is a film guide explaining the origin of school districts in Montana. The film can be borrowed I understand from, Montana State College in Bozeman, write to William Johnstone, if you are interested. The Montana Congress hopes to stay on top of this Peabody study until everyone has a chance to understand how their county is organized, what is proposed, and finally discuss possible changes. Of course we have opposition already to the idea of even studying school organization.

Please call me at LI 9-7781 if ever you are in Missoula and have a minute.

Carrie Koestner

Taylor and Bartron

ACCOUNTING AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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MISSOULA, MONTANA

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

Adeline P. Bartron
EDUCATOR

NOVEMBER 9, 1959

OFFICE: 1654 S. 5TH WEST

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DEAR BEN WOLD,

IT'S GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU. THE PTA COULD HAVE MADE NO BETTER CHOICE THAN CHOOSING YOU TO SPEARHEAD SUCH A COMMENDABLE PROJECT. I WILL BE GLAD TO LEND ANY EFFORT I CAN MAKE TOWARD HELPING AND THANKS FOR ASKING ME.

THE CAPACITY IN WHICH I NOW SERVE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT #34 BOARD OF TRUSTEES IS AS "AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE" IN MATTERS PERTAINING TO PUBLIC LAWS 874 AND 815. AS YOU KNOW, FEDERAL FUNDS FROM THESE SOURCES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS.

I AM GLAD THAT YOU REMEMBER THAT ADELINE BARTRON AND I HAVE LONG ADVOCATED THE BUILDING OF A BRANCH OF THE MISSOULA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL AT SEELEY LAKE AS OPPOSED TO THE FORMATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT UP THERE APART FROM MISSOULA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL. WE HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT ONLY IN THIS WAY WILL YOU BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS THAT THE BROADER TAX BASE CAN DO IN PROVIDING THE HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM AND FACILITIES WITH WHICH OUR COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL HAS ALREADY SET THE PACE.

YOU'LL RECALL THAT IN APRIL OF 1957, I WAS IN WASHINGTON D. C. AND WENT TO THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION SPECIFICALLY TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF FEDERAL AID TOWARD THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING AT SEELEY LAKE. I LEARNED AT THAT TIME THAT AN APPLICATION COULD BE MADE BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF MCHS WITH A POSSIBILITY OF QUALIFYING YOUR AREA FOR FUNDS TOWARD THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HIGH SCHOOL PLANT. BEAR IN MIND THAT SUCH AN APPLICATION WOULD NEED TO BE MADE BY THE MCHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES REQUESTING THAT YOUR AREA BE ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE COUNTY IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDS.

CAN YOU, THEREFORE, SEE THAT YOUR JOB IS TO WORK WITH THE MCHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TOWARD REALIZATION OF YOUR PROJECT?

THE APPLICATION MAY NOT BE AS DIFFICULT AS YOU MIGHT THINK BECAUSE ADELINE IS THE "AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE" FOR MCHS IN HANDLING P.L. 874 AND 815 MATTERS, JUST AS I AM FOR YOUR DISTRICT.

AS TO OTHER ASPECTS OF A BUILDING, I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO ASSUME THAT ALL THE NECESSARY FUNDS COULD BE OBTAINED FROM FEDERAL AID. THOUGHTS TURN THEN TO BONDING.

YOU ARE RIGHT - IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO CONVINCe ALL OF MISSOULA COUNTY OF YOUR NEED. BUT LET ME REMIND YOU THAT ONE MILL VIA SPECIAL LEVY RAISES ABOUT \$25,000 FOR MCHS AND, -PERHAPS, IT WOULDN'T BE UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT THE VOTERS OF MISSOULA COUNTY COULD BE PERSUADED TO VOTE 8 OR 10 MILLS FOR ONE YEAR ONLY, IN ORDER TO HELP TOWARD A HIGH SCHOOL PLANT AT SEELEY LAKE. SUPPORTING A SPECIAL LEVY FOR MCHS CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE AND IT'S AN EASIER TALKING POINT THAN A BOND ISSUE.

AS TO OTHER FACTS AND FIGURES, IF GIVEN SUFFICIENT TIME, I CAN PRODUCE THEM FOR YOU. BUT, AS I SEE IT, YOUR JOB IS NOT TO PERSUADE THE PEOPLE OF MISSOULA COUNTY AT THIS TIME, BUT RATHER TO ALIGN YOURSELVES WITH THE MCHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOW AND IN THE FUTURE AND WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL - FOR A COOPERATIVE VENTURE IN ESTABLISHING A BRANCH OF THE MISSOULA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS AT SEELEY LAKE, MONTANA.

IT'S GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU, BEN. GET IN TOUCH WITH ME IF I CAN BE OF FURTHER SERVICE. BOTH AD AND I JOIN IN SENDING OUR BEST WISHES FOR YOUR SUCCESS.

SINCERELY,



LAVERNE W. TAYLOR

TAYLOR and BARTRON

CONSULTANTS

Box 1479
Missoula, Montana

January 19, 1960

Ben Wold
Seeley Lake, Montana

Dear Ben,

I have been turning your letter over in my mind now for several days hoping for some real suggestions to pass on to you and your group in PTA.

I keep coming back to the realization that whatever your eagerness for going ahead with plans for a high school might be, the fact remains that initiation must come from the Missoula County High School Board of Trustees. That you are well aware of and so, too, do you wish it to be. However, the status of that board is such right now that efforts would be utterly wasted to attempt to get action from it when the possibility exists that there might be an entirely new membership come April 2nd. There is a chance that some of the same ones will be caucussed and will run again for the office and get elected. But even so, there's a lot to become acquainted with - let alone tackling such a new venture as a branch of the high school at Seeley Lake.

I don't mean to sound pessimistic. I don't feel that way, but I do think there's more advantage to you in waiting until the new board gets under way. I would rather, too, that you not expend your energies with questionnaires and getting your people all fired up when any figures or information might be out-dated within 6 months time.

Here are some suggestions that might be useful. In talking with Mr. K.W. Bergan when he was here December 14th on Public Law 874 business, I learned that the state average for building costs for high school construction is about \$20,000 per class room. He said a 5 or 6 room building was adequate. In addition there would be the costs of a gymnasium, lunch room, and library possibly. You could expect a complete plant for about \$200,000 according to past figures. You would be eligible for Public Law 815 money in partial support of this amount, so it is not unrealistic to think in terms of a county-wide special mill levy rather than a bond issue for getting the balance. A mill raises about \$25,000 for the Missoula County High School area.

Mr. Bergan also told me that his first job several years ago when he went into the State Department of Public Instruction was to help Park County High School with a proposed bond issue to build a branch of its school at Gardiner, Montana. It was accomplished. He said he'd be glad to help with any suggestions he could offer when the time comes.

Read

Now then, one other item of interest. LaVerne and I talked with Frank Lowrance, Field Representative in Montana for the U.S. Housing and Home Finance Administration. His program also covers advanced planning for communities, etc. I believe he has talked to some in Seeley about a water system and sewage disposal. I think Alvin Rovero will remember him. Anyway, he said money for advanced planning for a school building could be made available to the high school board and he would be available whenever he's asked to come in. With some money to work with, the high school could set up some committees for working with you and hire some expert advise on building needs that would not need to take any money away from a building program.

My suggestions would be then, that sometime after the new high school board gets settled down, write to the chairman or the principal, D.H. Beary, and ask to be given some time on the agenda at a board meeting to discuss with a two or three member committee from your group about the needs for a high school in Seeley Lake. About all you'll need to talk about would be the enrollment prospects for the area, a brief discussion of how the pupils and parents feel about the transportation problem, if any; and this would be a good time to bring up the advanced planning idea.

I hope this will be of some help to you, Ben. For the present, I'd report to your people that you "are working on it" and not be in a great rush to have them get specific right now.

We'll keep our ears to the ground for ideas that will help and do as much ground work for you as we can.

Sincerely,

Adeline Bartron
Adeline Bartron