

HISTORY OF MIDVALE HIGH SCHOOL

Midvale School District

The Gold Rush in California brought many people to the West. Some disillusioned miners began roving the country looking for new territories to settle while other settlers came to Idaho in search of farmland. The first settlers in Middle Valley were Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Reid and four children who came in the fall of 1868. They founded a beautiful Valley of rich unexploited soil on the winding Weiser River. Wild animals were everywhere and a friendly Bannock Indian tribe (Chief Bannock Joe) frequented the Valley to net fish and hunt game. The Indians traded fish with the settlers for bright pieces of tin or bits of red twine. Money was scarce and most settlers bartered with each other and the Indians. Mr. Reed put in a sawmill in the mountains of Pine Creek and sawed lumber for a small house and shed for his oxen.

In May of 1881 eight families totaling 48 people started out from Mercer County, Missouri for the "Oregon Country." After three difficult months these pioneers crest the hill into Middle Valley and laid claim to plots of land that had been surveyed and laid out by the government in 1889. The trip West was expensive in terms of wagon wheels, horses and tolls paid along the way. Many arrived with little money and were forced to borrow or take jobs to make it through the first winter, until crops could mature. The Homestead Act had opened up "free" land from 40 to 160 acres per individual. The settlers were required to build a home and live on the homestead and clear so much land within a five-year period before the title to the land belonged to them.

The Middle Valley ditch company began work in the '70's and became incorporated in 1884 bringing the dream of irrigation to the Valley. This project was second only to the railroad in the development of the Valley and eventually brought a large influx of population. Settlers attacked the sage brushed land and began digging the canal by hand or team to reclaim "Poverty Flats". The canal ran from the river then skirted the easterly edge of the Valley for a distance of some six or seven miles. This supply of good clean irrigation water brought extensive cultivation to the Valley. Settlers to the Valley added up to about 30 families by 1885. Besides raising grains, hay, fruits and vegetables the early settlers also raised cattle and sheep. By the early 1900's Midvale was the "sheep capital" of the world.

These early settlers soon realized the need for schools and churches. Both were held in homes till buildings were completed. The first schools were subscription type schools. A subscription school is one where the patrons agreed to pay a certain amount per family or student to the teacher they hired. This was usually not a written but only verbal agreement. The first grade school was in the Shoe Peg district on Keithley Creek (No. 4) at the home of J. H. Reed. The teacher was Mr. Welch, an old trapper, followed by Mr. Davy Richardson. He taught children during the day and at night he taught adults in homes where he stayed. Teachers boarded with area families and the school lasted two to three months at that time.

In 1876 the Valley School District was officially organized. It reached from the Mann Creek divide to the Middle Valley/Salubria divide. The next school year (1877-78) was interrupted by the Bannock Indian wars. Women and children were taken to the fort at the mouth of Mann Creek and later to Fort Salubria. The farmers continued to work their fields, hiding when Indians appeared.

After no real incidents the settlers returned to their homes. The following year a band of thieving Indians ambushed a party of four men, killing three and badly wounding a fourth. After this the Indians came through in the fall from Kamiah to the Snake River to fish, and stopped in this valley to dry their fish. 1904 was the last summer that they came through the Valley.

The first grade school (No. 4) building measuring 30' by 40' was erected near the Griff Keithley farm by volunteer donations and labor in 1883. All the men who could drive and nail helped. Benches 2 ½ inches thick, 18 inches wide

On the other side of the river the first Middle Valley grade school district was beginning.

The first school on the "Poverty Flats" side of the Valley (so-called because it wasn't productive until after the ditch was completed) was held in a small shack near the river on the Robert Jackson Ranch. The teacher, Mr. Harold, soon gave up as the kids were too mischievous. The following year, 1884, Mr. Montgomery tried it, but bad weather closed the school that winter. In 1885 Miss Minnie Haven was the teacher in the John McRoberts' home. The first school building here was constructed by William Pickett northeast of the town of Midvale in about 1886. Mr. Pickett christened the school Salem out of sentiment, perhaps, for a school he attended in Missouri, which bore that name. In those days the words "elementary school" were not in use. It was always "grade school" probably because there were no high schools. This school (Salem) burned in the winter of 1904. Mr. Reeves taught in the churches until the second Salem school was built by Mr. Edson that summer. It was built of wood and housed all eight grades, two grades to a room. The upstairs was used for storage and later classes. A large hallway extended down the middle of the building, with rooms on either side. It was very simply arranged without benefit

and 12 feet long contained plenty of material for carving initials. Homemade desk for the teacher and a pot-bellied stove completed the inside furnishings. Coats and hats were hung along the wall on nails. In the corner was a shelf on which sat a water bucket with the dipper or therein. Water came from the nearby Keithley Creek. A hand bell was used to call the children to class. An outside toilet was for the girls, but for some time the Willow Grove on the creek bank had to do for the boys. The 1883 school served until 1909 when up "modern" one was built and named Mt. Pleasant. At the Mt. Pleasant School, living quarters were later furnished for the teacher. The teachers bought most of their food at reduced prices from the neighbors. One year, this school had 90 children (K-9), with only one teacher, G. W. Williams, who did a terrific job. He was also the Church of Christ preacher at that time. Later, a second room was added and two classes, (1-4) and (5-9) were held.

of ornament other than belfry and steeple and a bit of shingle "lace". The school was used at first as a place of worship; and soon after its construction a hard wind twisted it on its foundation, but it was not damaged it was twisted back onto its foundation. This building was used until the January 1947 when it was destroyed one night by a fire of "unknown origin." This building was not replaced as a separate unit. The students were housed in various churches in town and at the Mt. Pleasant School on Keithley Creek. In 1953 three grade school rooms were added to the existing high school building. There were other outlying schools, with many children who eventually fed into Midvale Rural High School. The other grade schools were Sage Creek, Thousands Springs, Valley View, Sweet Home, Happy Hollow, Fairview, Dixie Buena Vista, Banner, and North and South Crane Creek.

Many developments in the valley came into being before the high school started. Before roads and railroads arrived in Middle Valley, pack-strings made long trips to Boise; Kelton, Utah; and Umatilla/Baker, Oregon for supplies twice a year. The men went overland and there was no contact with them during these long trips. The earliest roads were built to Cuddy Mountain Mill, Salubria,

and Weiser. The first wooden bridge was constructed by Mr. McCully across the river, replacing the ferry about 1883. This bridge was replaced by the first steel bridge in 1893 and again in 1911. These roads helped make travel more convenient although they needed constant attention as the spring floods often carried the bridge accesses away. Old Highway 95 was let out by contract and was built from Weiser to Cambridge around 1899. This road was first oiled in 1930 so there was the many years of dust in the Valley. The first car (all were black!) In the Valley was bought by Harold Sherman in 1911. A trip from Midvale to Boise took 24 hours in those days. Driver's licenses were not required and there were really no "rules" for the road.

1884 brought the railroad to Weiser. One train was called "The Pony" and it ran from Boise to Huntington every day. This made the trip considerably shorter for supplies. By 1899, P. & I.N. (Pacific and Idaho Northern) tracks reached Midvale and the town was laid out and the depot completed. Safe, easy and quick transportation was now available. The children loved to watch these old steam engines "snort and puff" and a blow steam out on all sides, and of course loved to hear the whistle. By 1900 many stores were clustered about the town, with business flourishing because of the farming and sheep raising industry in the county. The Middle Valley was the original name used and validated by the Post Office establishment

Prior to 1911, and those who desired schooling beyond the eighth grade began attending the Institute in Weiser. Dormitories were furnished and students worked on the farm, in the kitchen or laundry for room and board. The first high school in Midvale was held in 1911 in the Baptist Church with Mr. Pedley as the principal and only teacher. In 1912 there were two teachers, Mr. Pedley and Minnie Carruthers and the first two graduates were Messrs. Eddie Fletcher and Herbert Reavis. This joyous occasion was held in the Baptist Church in 1913. Mr. M.M. MacIntosh came in 1913 when there were 18 students and one graduate, Tresa Fletcher, later taught in the grade school after marrying the local rural mail carrier. 1914 was the last year for classes in the church with 25 "spinsters and gents". The two graduates were Floyd Reavis

in 1876. This name were shortened to Midvale by order of the post master in 1906. The telephone system was installed by Levi Keithly in 1906, serving most of the basin. One party line consisted of 26 people on a line. Everyone was "real informed" as they listened in on many conversations. A printing press was installed and the first issue of the Reporter was put out March 11, 1909. In 1910 the town was incorporated and Mr. L.J. Kay installed as the first mayor. This was also the year the town went "dry". In 1911, the "great fire" burned seven of the businesses in town.

The first combine came to the Valley in that same year and 1912 saw a scarlet fever epidemic affect almost every family. In 1913 a bumper crop gave the highest yield known, causing people to flock in, settling wherever vacant land was attainable. Electric light lines were put through the valley in 1915. Power was provided somewhat sporadically by a small plant on Rush Creek in Cambridge. These first electric lights gave about as much light as a lightning bug but were wonderful. The first radio was brought to town by Joe Keithley. The first music broadcast was over the telephone when "central" did a "circuit ring" and everyone came on the line to listen to the radio. Joe later charged 50 cents for listeners to hear the presidential returns from Boise. Great damage was inflicted on the town and the railroad when in 1950, the great flood inundated the valley. All of these events affected the need for further education in the Valley.

and Lee Turnbaugh, the latter who came back in the '40's as principal of the Salem Grade School. The school year was now running seven months a year, from October to April. Some students paid to board with town families for the school year while others worked for their board doing dishes, ironing, babysitting etc. These young people worked hard for their education. Paychecks were often turned over to parents to help with family expenses.

In 1915 a new "modern" brick high school building was completed. It had two classrooms a cloakroom, and a laboratory room. F.B. French was the principal with Helen Berolet as assistant. Over 40 students attended with two graduates. In 1916, the lab room was turned into a domestic science room. There was also a kitchen and a very small office and library. A manual training

building was erected separately and served as a lab and classroom. School finances were in “good shape” and the school held to a high standard of academics. The school day started with patriotic songs, but there was no flag salute until after WWI as it was not written till then. Bible reading often took place immediately before afternoon classes. The Carl Fletcher property just north of the high school was purchased by the school board in 1921 to give additional room for sports and recreation. From 1922 to 1926, the high school “met the challenge of advancing civilization by large improvement in student body, athletics, debate and journalistic affairs.” The student body was run very efficiently with an annual carnival, junior and senior plays, glee club, and class entertainments. There was a very good baseball team, a super track team and good debate team.

Superintendents Thurlow Bryant and John Brandt worked hard for two years using their influence with the State Board of Education endeavoring to secure accreditation for the school. In 1927-28 this goal was accomplished with great joy! In 1929 a “small mishap” occurred in the burning of the high school barn and coal shed. This barn held about 20 horses that were ridden to school. Sometimes the barn didn’t even hold all

Midvale High School has been noted for its dedication of Academic Excellence over the years. Traditional education was stressed including core subjects like English, Literature, Math, Sciences, History, Civics, and Languages. Student’s literacy rate was very high and writing and speaking were competitive arts. Students studied hard for good grades and competed in debate, spelling and academic competitions. The grading curve in 1920 was as follows: 95-100=1; 89-94=2; 83-88=3; 77-82=4; 70-65=5 and under 70=F. Midvale has accumulated many high SAT and ACT test scores over the years holding consistently above state and national averages. The small classes and individual attention by the teachers have certainly been a blessing to our students over the years.

When the Salem grade school burn in 1947 it was decided to add the grade school rooms to the existing high school building. Two elementary rooms were added in 1952 along with the gymnasium. From 1963 to 1967 the last major

the horses. There were 15 or so kids from the Keithly Creek side and they like to trot across the bridge together to make it rattle and bounce. This didn’t set well with the city fathers as they ruled the students had to walk their horses across the bridge and not all at one time. Riding horses or walking tow to three miles even in the worst of weather was an accepted way of life. Teams, saddle horses and wagons in the spring, and skis, bobsleds and cutters in the winter were used for greater distances.

The community completed a major addition to the high school in 1931. The great pride of students and patrons alike was that it was one of the only schools built in Idaho with cash on hand. The new building added three classrooms, a library, an auditorium for basketball, school plays and other entertainments. The typing room was remodeled and there was an addition of “water works”, showers and the furnace. This was a vast improvement and increased the standard of the school a great deal. That fall there were all new faculty members with the exception of principal Mr. Brinton. The graduation class of 23 in 1932 was the largest class in the history of the high school to date. 1933 was another record enrollment of 73.

building effort took place. Locker rooms, four elementary classrooms, the multipurpose room/cafeteria, kitchen, were added. In 1969 the science room was added with chemistry lab and chemical storage rooms. The architect for these additions was Charles R. Johnston and Associates of Payette, Idaho. There has been no additional building since 1970. The largest student bodies were in the late forties and sixties.

In 1946 the old Dixie School building was moved across from the existing school to house the music classes. From the very beginning, the people of Midvale supported music and music education. Glee clubs came first to the school and then a small orchestra of violins, piano, maybe a baritone horn, trombone, alto horn and saxophones, even a tuba and drummer. The glee clubs sang songs like “Sweet and Low”, “Beautiful Dreamer”, and “The Bulldog on the Bank”. The bands played waltzes, such as “Over the Waves: and marches like “Old Comrades”. Often the bands play polkas and

schottische for dancing. At first the schools didn't hire music teachers but the groups were likely led by local musicians or teachers who knew some music. The era of the 1920's saw the growth of music in the public schools and a real beginning of bands as we know them today. A leader was hired and music purchased by the school district as long as funds were available. Successful years were under the musicianship of Mr. C.N. Stocking (1952-55); Mr. DeScean (to '56); then Mr. William Johnston (1962-65). By 1963 Larry Craig, a senior, helped the student body decide to buy used

Manual training classes began early in the school's history. In the 30's under principals Si Borton, there was much done to impress on the students a love of the soil and what it could produce. He was also a local handyman and gave generously of this knowledge and worked along with his students in the fields. The shop building was built in 1949-50. The more modern Vo-Ag (now Ag Science and Technology) program was started in 1959 with Everett Howard as the first advisor. That same year a classroom addition was added to the shop building by builder, Tom Holmes. The other advisors include Lynn Hughes, Dan Warfield, Steve Bott, Ted Mickleson and Stuart Nesbitt. Midvale joined the future Farmers of America (FFA) programs allowing students to compete for national, state and district positions, of which there have been several. There have been numerous State FFA Degree recipients with some Star State Farmers. Others have participated in the National FFA Chorus and Band in Kansas City. The Vo-Ag program has offered many training in agriculture related occupations and leadership training and opportunities. Domestic Science (Homemaking) was popular for the girls for many years. The Future Homemakers of America (FHA) program has functioned very efficiently also, allowing many to compete and perform as National, State and District officers. The projects, competitions and training has been very valuable to both girls and boys over the years.

The first Midvale Annual was published in

Athletic events were of special interest to the life of the community, especially after the first gymnasium was completed in 1931. Both boys and girls played basketball early on in Midvale. The

uniforms and the band of 47 members marched in the Christmas parades at Boise and Ontario and played at contest festivals. After Mr. Johnston left in 1965, he was followed by Mr. Igaroski, Jack Fields, and others. During these years a good jazz band was formed and performing and marching continued. The band boosters bought new uniforms in the early 80's. Mr. Johnston returned in 1987, but with student enrollment much lower, the smaller band must content itself to play for concerts, ball games and festivals, but not parades.

1916 by the printer at the Reporter, These early annual were very well done and interesting. During the depression years none were printed or were done by hand on construction paper with the typing done by the students. Black and white photos were attached to the pages. The name "Megaphone" was its name in the 30's.

School recess fun included leap frog, spank the donkey, marbles, skipping rope, tag, run sheep run, snow ball fights, etc. The marbles were "dobies", "china babies", and "glassies." Playing dobies was for "keeps", and the other two games were for fun. School program included lots of plays, singing, Christmas programs and even debating. One debate subject remembered by an old timer was the following: "Resolved . . . that spring house cleaning did more harm than good!" Other entertainment included skiing, ice skating, round-ups and bucking contest, hunting, the country dance, hand sleds and toboggans, silent movies and early radio drama. In summer swimming in the ponds and canals was popular. Freshman initiation was a tradition and for many years upper class-men initiated requiring the girls to wear ragged dresses backwards and green ribbons. The boys wore levis cut off at the knees. Other years the girls and boys had to switch clothes and green food coloring was applied to skin and hair for some time. There was an initiation party each year also. Other annual events included Senior Sneak day (to Boise or to Starkey, Baccalaureate the Sunday before graduation.

early girls uniforms were black wool serge bloomers and white midi blouses with ties. These were very hot and came to the knees. When shorts came in, they were considered immoral by many.

Other sports included football, basketball, gardenball for girls, track, wrestling, and the last added was girls volleyball. The P.&I.N. lead got its name from the Pacific and Idaho Northern Railroad that ran from Weiser to near New Meadows. The P. & I.N. reserved a train car for each team in the league to travel to their games along the railroad as this was only real means of transportation for some time. Sometime after '36 at least, the P. & I.N. league was joined with the Long Valley league, which went on around the mountain at McCall. It then became the Long Pin League. Boys and girls baseball/softball was once a popular sport and also football with several league/district champion teams. Over the years Midvale boys have won numerous Long Pin basketball championships, have won District II eight times but have never won a state championship to date. Midvale girls won many league and district basketball championships and were state champs in 1982. Girls volleyball started in the early 70's including many league and district wins. The numerous games and tournaments are very well attended by a very supportive community.

An ex-teacher (1922) summed up Midvale very well, "I soon discovered that Midvale was an ideal school town. There was a live PTA, which did not exploit the children; and parents on the whole supported the teachers. Disciplinary hassles were few and those only minor. Parent-teacher relationships were pleasant. The two grade system (two grades per teacher) was a stimulus and one could accomplish a great deal. I treasure the contact with the lovely children, many of whom had religious training and background. We found them amenable to further education. Teaching was indeed a pleasure!"

Several things have brought on decline of numbers in the valley. The fires and floods were certainly discouraging. In the bank crash of 1929 many lost their savings, and the demise of the railroad took away jobs and transportation. Over the years the numbers have dwindled as farming

has become more difficult and children have seen fit to leave the farm and seek their fortune in the city.

There have been notable Idahoans who graduated from Midvale High School over the years. Larry Craig, Idaho Representative to the House of Representatives graduated in 1964; State Senator, Roger Fairchild, and State Representative, Wayne Sutton, are also Midvale graduates. Over the years this small high school has given an effective education to many who are thankful for their years in Midvale. There have been many farmers, nurses, teachers, and preachers as well as engineers, and other professionals graduate from this high school. Midvale High School has taught many of high character, who have been stable homebuilders in our valley.

Compiled by Nancy Coates
December, 1989

**PRINCIPALS AND SUPERINTENDENTS
Midvale High School**

Years	Term	Superintendent
1911-1912	2	Mr. Pedley
1912-1913		Mr. Pedley & Assistant Minnie Carruthers
1913-1914	2	Mr. M.M. McIntosh
1914-1915		Mr. M.M. McIntosh & Miss Miller
1915-1916	1	Mr. F.V. French & Helen Bertolet
1916-1918	2	Prof. Clyde Jewett Skinner
1918-1923	5	Mr. John A. Lindsay
1923-1924	1	Mr. Si Borton
1924-1926	2	Mr. W.H. Linder
1926-1928	2	Mr. Thurlow Bryant
1928-1929	1	Mr. John Brandt (Accreditation)
1929-1930	1	Mr. James M. Adams
1931-1933	3	Mr. George Brinton
1933-1936	3	Mr. Clyde Langlois
1936-1941	5	Mr. William S. Linder
1941-1945	4	Mr. Earl Heidel
1945-1946	1	Mr. Gene Inskeep
1946-1950	4	Mr. Laurence Wilson
1950-1951	1	Mr. Lowell E. Sayre
1951-1952	1	Mr. Hugh F. Clark
1952-1958	6	Mr. Carl M. Neilsen
1958-1959	1	Mrs. Avis McCadden (Substitute Supt.)
1959-1963	4	Mr. Alvin Luke
1963-1965	2	Mr. Keith Slane
1965-1968	3	Mr. Lee Foltz
1968-1972	4	Mr. Everett Howard
1972-1975	3	Mr. John Armitage
1975-1977	2	Mr. Clark Gardner

1977-1988	11	Mr. Joe Whitten
1988-Present	2	Mr. James Kantola