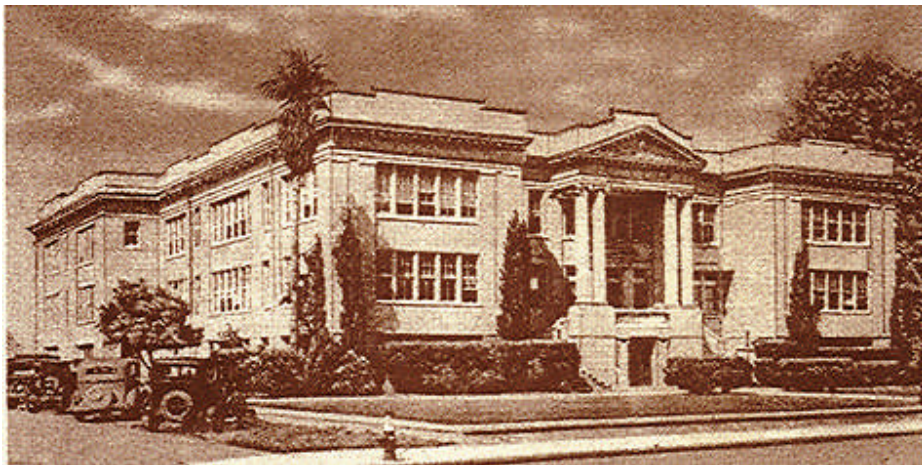


*THE BILOXI
PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

1924 - 2001

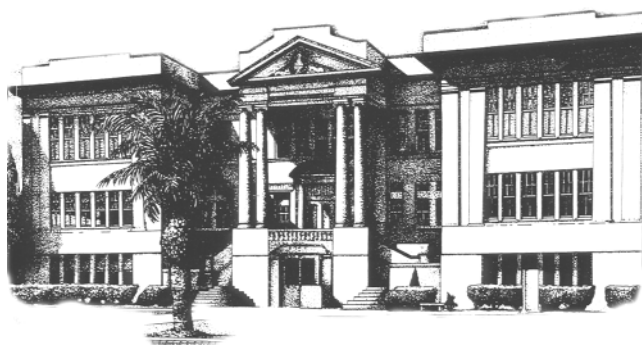
*THE GROWTH OF THE
BILOXI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM - VOL . 2*



Zan Skelton

*THE BILOXI
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PREFACE

In 1969 Mr. R.D. Brown, then superintendent of the Biloxi Public Schools, and Dr. Bill Lee, assistant superintendent, asked me to write a brief history of the Biloxi Public Schools as a summer project. With very little time and limited access to resource materials, I wrote a history that drew heavily on already published sources. Thirty-two years later, I find myself revisiting that history, which remained unpublished and, I am certain, forgotten. Without further acknowledging references to that work, I have freely drawn from it in writing parts of this history.

In 1979, the City of Biloxi commissioned a history of the Biloxi schools as part of a series of historical documents under the leadership of Julia C. Guice, project director and editor, and writers and researchers Stephanie Capuano Richmond and David Alfred Wheeler. Their book, *The Growth of the Biloxi Public School System*, told the story of the development of the Biloxi schools from 1860 to 1924, when the school system reached what the authors called the end of the old school system and the beginning of the new.

In 2000, with her acute sense of the importance of historical preservation and her deep and abiding love for and interest in the Biloxi schools, Mrs. Ruth Huls Hunt, Biloxi Public Schools Historian, initiated efforts to see that the history of the Biloxi schools would be continued. Supported by Superintendent Dr. Larry Drawdy and the Biloxi School Board and working with Biloxi librarian Murella Powell, Mrs. Hunt helped secure the services of Russell Barnes to provide preliminary research assistance for updating the history of the schools, which would take the story from 1924 to 2002.

For those who are charged with administering today's complex and demanding public schools and with charting the educational future, a searching look at the history of a school system may yield both perspective and purpose. For others, too, that history may well serve to bring about new insights into both problems and progress. For those most directly involved in the processes of education and for those most vitally affected by those processes—the children of the Biloxi Public Schools and their parents—this history has been written.

Readers of this work should keep in mind that the task of writing a history of a school system necessarily involves a great deal of both collecting and selecting. Obviously many names and pictures of people who made valuable contributions to the Biloxi schools do not appear in this book. Given sufficient space and time, perhaps nothing would be left out of the final manuscript. But the most important facts, I believe, are present, and the names and pictures in the book deserve to be included. Any errors or significant omissions in this work are my own.

I hope that this history will provide helpful information for individuals, both in the near future and in some distant time, who may wish to learn more about the Biloxi schools during the past seventy-six years.

~ Biloxi, Mississippi, January 2002 ~

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My long association with the Biloxi schools, beginning in 1953 and continuing through the present, has been marked by a rewarding and satisfying relationship with members of the administration over those years, members of the School Board, and teachers and students who enriched my own school history. It is impossible to name all the people who have been helpful to me and supportive over almost a half-century, but my gratitude is as deep and wide as the years themselves.

Writing a history of a school system requires the assistance of a great many people, and it is appropriate that I begin by naming individuals who were most helpful to me. Among those I first wish to acknowledge with much appreciation are former superintendent of schools Mr. R.D. Brown and former assistant superintendent Dr. Bill Lee. In the "Preface" I noted their part in my early work regarding the history of the Biloxi schools.

I particularly wish to acknowledge the person who has been most instrumental in seeing that this project was begun and carried out, Biloxi Schools Historian Mrs. Ruth Huls Hunt. Without her unflagging interest and support, the history would have remained unwritten. Superintendent Dr. Larry Drawdy, my longtime friend with whom I have worked so closely since 1975 and whose administrative leadership has always been marked by both a sound vision for the future and a deep respect for the past, gave his approval to this work and made it possible. Floyd Bullock, director of print operations for the Biloxi schools, and his assistant Phil Vanderhagen were responsible for printing and binding this history, and, like everything else they do, it has been done with professional care and meticulous attention to detail. In the long list of people who have been helpful to me and to whom I express my gratitude are members of the School Board; Dr. Olon Ray, former Biloxi superintendent who made it possible for me to continue my uninterrupted working association with the Biloxi schools after my retirement from teaching; Melissa Mallory, secretary to the superintendent, whose unfailing assistance was vital to the conduct of research related to school records; director of business management Jude McDonnell, director of administrative services Paul Tisdale, former community outreach director Susan Hunt, English Department chair Mary Sue Veal, and Biloxi City Officer Brenda Haise Johnston, all of whom were once students in my English classes; former administrative assistant Bob Cherry, with whom I worked on numerous school publications in the 1980s and 1990s; Dr. Robert Bowles and Monica Hill, who helped me find information about former superintendents and principals; Mrs. Murella Powell, history librarian in the Biloxi Public Library, and Mrs. Ethelyn Gonsoulin of the library staff; the library staff of the *Sun Herald*; Biloxi High School administrator Bob Goolsby and his staff of student assistants, and Susie Seymour, of the pupil accounting office; Norman Nyary, who helped with student records; photographer Claude Sicuro, whose assistance in reproducing several photographs is very much appreciated; Charlotte Breal, who helped as I reviewed Board minutes; Beryl Dupont, coordinator of school information and community outreach; Donna Drieling of the school information office, and Virginia Boudreaux, administrative services office; Karen Eichorn, computer systems manager; Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway and other Biloxi city officials who recognize and honor the community's educational heritage; and the thousands of students and many former colleagues, particularly those English teachers with whom I worked so closely so long, who enriched my own life as it became part of this history.

Writing a history based on accurate information requires the particular capabilities of a person who finds his rewards in searching for the most important facts in a mine filled with the minutiae of daily life, separating and categorizing disorganized and unrelated bits and pieces of the human experience that later may prove helpful to the writer in presenting a factual and clear story. Historical researcher Russell Barnes is the person responsible for that vital part of this history. His conscientious efforts have been valuable and very much appreciated.

~ Z.L.S. ~