

A Pictorial History
of

Ozark Adventist Academy

A School Born in Hard Times

Compiled by

June Melton

Ozark Adventist Academy is a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school, fully accredited on the high school level, located on Flint Creek, approximately two miles south of Gentry, Arkansas, owned and operated by the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Mission Statement as printed in the 2003-2004 School Bulletin:

Our purpose is to create a learning environment
in which students come to discover
a love for God,
respect for self,
and the skills for fulfilled Christian living.

Spring, 2004

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Preface

This history of Ozark Adventist Academy is a compilation of materials that have been gathered from histories written by J. O. Wilson, Velda Nelson, and others through the years, articles in **The Mountain Echo**, information included in **The Flintonian**, and personal information gleaned from those who have experienced the happenings at their school.

Much of the information we have on the history of the school after it became a junior academy in 1924 until the early or mid 50's was gathered by Roy Cole (member of the staff 1941-60) in 1967 and written up in a paper. We are drawing heavily on that material prepared by Mr. Cole for this history. We are also indebted to Mr. Cole for the campus maps (Maps A, B, C, D), showing the location of buildings that have served the school. The erection dates for these buildings placed on the maps are accurate to the best of our knowledge.

This history is built around the early beginnings of the school and the senior academy principals. Many glaring needs challenged each academy principal as he/she took charge of the school. Each one evidently undertook to accomplish at least what seemed to him/her to be the most urgent of those needs. We know they all worked against great odds for lack of facilities and funds and carried heavy burdens for the welfare of the school and the young people who came to them for training. There are practically no records of the detailed doings at the school in its earlier days, and even the accomplishments of the later administrators are not recorded in any detail. So we can mention here only a few high points in the growth and development of the academy. Listed below are the principals with their terms of service which is a general outline for this history.

Principals of Flint Creek Junior Academy/ Ozark Junior Academy

William Miller	1924-25
Roy Post	1925-27
Mr. Nylander	
Miss Pearl Pride	
Ben Butherus	
Robert Benton	
Joshua C. Turner	1933-36
John Hindbaugh	1936-37
Mrs. Orval Atkins	1937-38
Warren D. Pierce	1938-

Principals of Ozark Academy/ Ozark Adventist Academy:

1. Warren D. Pierce	1938-44
2. C. E. Kellogg	1944-45
3. Mrs. Crystal Duce	1945-46
4. Joseph H. Bischoff	1946-50
5. Leon E. Russell	1950-55
6. Harold Eugene Haas	1955-57
7. F. Herbert Hewitt	1957-63
8. Joshua J. Swinyar	1963-69
9. H. Dean Kinsey	1969-73
10. Orlin R. McLean	1973-74
11. Richard W. Bendall	1974-79
12. Beaman T. Senecal	1979-83
13. Garry J. Suds	1983-85
14. Dale R. Kongorski	1985-86
15. C. Paul Rouse	1986-91
16. Richard A. Aldridge	1991-96
17. G. Charles Dart	1996-02
18. David A. Branum	2002-03
19. Lyle H. Hansen	2003-

The OAA principals are numbered to coincide with the numbers on the page that follows:



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2



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This picture was taken April 15, 1967, at an OA alumni meeting. Left to right they are: Joshua C. Turner, Warren D. Pierce, Crystal Duce, Joseph Bischoff, Leon Russell, Gene Haas, and Joshua Swinyar.



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Ozark Adventist Academy Roots

The history of Ozark Adventist Academy is tied in with the beginning of the Gentry Seventh-day Adventist Church and church school work in the community. Mrs. Fern Watts-Forshee, daughter of Elder V. B. Watts, who was a pioneer evangelist in this area early in the 1900's, searched through old numbers of the **Review and Herald** and the **Southwestern Union Record**, on file in the General Conference Archives now located in Silver Spring, Maryland, and found that a church was organized in Siloam Springs in March, 1886. But she found also that some of the few members there moved away and others died, and it seems that they never had a church building in Siloam Springs. But meetings held in and around Gentry in 1902 and onward were very fruitful, bringing in a group of believers that increased quite rapidly. It seems likely that the church organized at Siloam Springs in March, 1886, was really the beginning of the Gentry Church.

In 1904 a church building was erected on Flint Creek, one of the members, D. A. James, having sold his farm to make this possible. In 1925 the south school room was added to the church building. Between then and 1930 the north room was added. These rooms were used for school classrooms as well as Sabbath School rooms for the children.



In 1905-06 a church school was conducted in the town of Gentry, and after one term there, was continued at Flint Creek. Miss Josephine Wilson, who later became Mrs. Joseph A. Tucker, was the teacher (Letter from Mrs. J. A. Tucker to J. O. Wilson February 18, 1974.) Some think there was a church school in the area in the latter nineties, sponsored by Elder H. Clay Griffin and others, but no definite records of such have yet been found. So the first school of which we have reliable records was that one-room, one-teacher church school of 1905-06. Therefore, for the present, that school goes into this historical sketch as the beginning of Ozark Adventist Academy.

Mrs. Clark (Pearl) Evilsisor, who with her husband had much to do with the development of the school from the time it became a junior academy in 1924, expressed the possibility that some kind of school was conducted in the area in the 1890's. In her "Sketches from the Early History of Ozark Academy," sent to J. O. Wilson with her letter of July 1, 1970, she had this to say:

"Ozark Academy had its beginning as a small church school about the year 1896. Elder H. Clay Griffin seems to have had an important part in getting the school started, or at least in keeping it going, as one of its early teachers, Miss Zella Miller, was a public school teacher who had accepted the Third Angel's Message under his preaching, and whom he persuaded to become a church school teacher at Flint Creek. It was then

quite a good-sized school, as the 7th and 8th grades contained about 22 members, with many in the lower grades beside.”

The Evilsisors did not come to the Gentry-Flint Creek area until 1924, but Elder Griffin was still here at that time and for several years afterward, so it is easily possible that what Mrs. Evilsisor has written may represent accurate information from Elder Griffin relating to the beginning and early days of the school. So, while the earliest positive date for the school is that of the 1905-06 term, there is still the possibility that it began several years earlier than that.



Front Row l. to r.: Margret Styles, Frances Twiggs, Fletcher Blalock, Edson Neal, Willard Styles (all five children were under 12 years old); Back Row l. to r.: Mrs. McCrary (in long black coat), Ruth (last name unknown), Mr. McCrary (the McCrary's owned the grounds where the faculty homes are now), Grace McCrary, Emma Blalock, Alice Styles, Rose Neal, Iva Butler, Bud Stephens, Mrs. Twiggs, Roy Blalock, Elder Twiggs (Principal and only teacher, Student (name unknown, Elder Richards (President of the Louisiana & Arkansas Conference, also father of H. M. S. Richards, the founder of the Voice of Prophecy), John Blalock, Conference Educational Secretary. This picture was taken of the Gentry School in the spring of 1923. Names and picture were provided by Fletcher and Amy Blalock November 12, 1985.

Mrs. Evilsisor goes on to explain that the attendance had dwindled to a mere prospective one student in 1923, so the school was closed. Then she proceeds with the story of its re-opening as a junior academy the next year, as follows:

“However, the Lord was preparing for this emergency by working on the heart of a Manual Arts teacher at Enterprise Academy in Kansas....Early

in 1924, Prof. William Miller and family began making plans to move to the Ozarks to start an industrial school. He talked this plan to his friends and neighbors and was finally able to enlist the interest and cooperation of the Clark B. Evilsisor family. Mr. Evilsisor was a carpenter and his wife a practical nurse with some teaching experience. It was decided that these two families should form the nucleus for a self-supporting Christian school in the Ozarks.

“So William Miller and Clark Evilsisor made a trip to Arkansas to seek for a suitable location. Their first stop was at the Flint Creek community, where they were fortunate to meet with the president of the Arkansas Conference, Elder H. M. J. Richards. When he heard of their plans to start a school, he urged them to search no farther but to settle at Flint Creek to build up the school work there. They accepted his invitation.

“The two families had 14 children. They chartered a railway car for moving household goods and tools, and arrived at Gentry in time to open school in September, 1924, with nine grades. Before time for the next term to begin, a few families had moved into the community.”

Mrs. Evilsisor mentions that the Jim Wilsons had arrived and that the Sam Shafers of Siloam Springs had transferred their children from public school to the school at Flint Creek. Then she continues: “Other families continued to move in for school until we had two school rooms well filled with promising youth in grades one to ten, with three teachers beside the Bible teacher provided by the Conference.”

Mrs. Evilsisor tells of the financial struggles the school went through during the depression that “struck the Flint Creek community with a paralyzing blast in 1929.” “Brother and Sister Frank McCrary gave valuable assistance at that time,” she says, “as did the Griffins, Sister Scoles, and others who had a burden for the school.” Self-sacrificing teachers, with the help of these friends of the school, kept things going through that crisis. Some work for students was provided by small industries launched by the Evilsisors—broom making, fruit and vegetable canning, sorghum making, etc.—and in Ben Wilson’s strawberry patch.

The Evilsisors moved away from the area in January, 1934. Their ten years of sacrificial pioneer work here had a great deal to do with getting the academy started and on its way to success. Their home served, during the years they were here, as the boarding facility for students coming to the school from distant places. A few students were cared for in other homes, but it was the Evilsisor home where most of them found a place to eat and sleep and a chance to work for their keep.

To the William Millers and the Clark Evilsisors goes the credit for getting the school started again after it was closed in 1923 and for raising it to the junior academy level. Ozark Adventist Academy owes a big salute to these families.

Pioneer Days

Let us begin with the year 1925. How different things looked at that time. There was no school on the hill, no bridge across Flint Creek. Beside the road stood a frame church (built in 1904) with two wings used as school rooms. There was a well in front and a road ran beside it leading to a farmhouse and beyond that a barn. A footbridge across Flint Creek lead to an old broom shop. To get this in perspective, the buildings were all in the valley north of the present campus.

Even when a bridge was built, it was not unusual for frequent wash-outs during heavy rains.

From Roy Cole's notes we see that students and teachers at Ozark Academy continued their intimate acquaintance with hard times and primitive facilities quite beyond the depression years of 1929 and the early thirties mentioned by Mrs. Evilsisor.



When the school re-opened in 1924, the Flint Creek church school became Flint Creek Junior Academy. In the early thirties, eleven grades were being taught and the name was changed to Ozark Junior Academy, indicating that larger plans for the school were being projected.



Joe Bischoff (right) in front of Blue Castle

The first building erected after the school became a junior academy was that famous first administration building, honored with the name of "Blue Castle." It was built almost entirely by donated labor from lumber salvaged from an old board and batted barn. It was covered outside and inside with blue paper—so "Blue Castle." It was built during the time Joshua Turner taught (1933-36). Originally it provided a place for the principal to live in right on the school grounds. Before that they had lived with families across Flint Creek. Later it provided offices for the principal and treasurer, a classroom, and even served as dormitory housing.

The next structure to grace the campus was an all-purpose little frame building near the church. (See Campus Map B) This served in many capacities during its time—dormitory (temporarily), storeroom, library and study hall downstairs and academy classrooms upstairs; and finally elementary church school upstairs and hot lunch room for the same downstairs. This building was demolished at the time the new church

school was opened on the west side of the road. Construction on the elementary school building was started in 1955 while Elder J. S. Jameson was the pastor.

During J. C. Turner's term as principal of Flint Creek Junior Academy (1933-36), a printer was added to the staff to teach this important trade and to provide further opportunity for students to earn their expenses. Edward Coffman (staff 1935-44) was a skilled printer and a zealous teacher of the art. Several of his students followed this profession after their school days and excelled in the trade.



Frame building near church first building on left. Next is Blue Castle. The retaining wall on the right is one of the few remaining landmarks on campus from the early days.

A two-story frame building, 20 by 50 feet, was erected in 1936 to house the printing and broom-making industries. This building burned down in 1937 and was replaced early in 1938 by a one-story frame building on the same foundation to serve as broom factory, another building being put up to house the printing industry. (See Map B). (The Mountain Echo, May, 1940, page 5.) In 1947 a new broom shop was built south of Flint Creek. (See Map C)



Print Shop built 1938-40



Warren D. Pierce (1938-44) came to Ozark Junior Academy in 1938. He seemingly looked the place over before coming but without his wife, Myrtle. When they arrived with their goods on a trailer and Mrs. Pierce saw Blue Castle as the only place to live, she sat down and had a good cry.

Professor Pierce and Elder Isaac Baker organized the churches of Northwest Arkansas into one district. The churches were Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville, Harrison, Hiwasse, Decatur, and Gentry. This organization was important for the support of this fledgling school.

It seems that Professor Warren D. Pierce, when he came in 1938, began at once to plan a larger ministry for the school on Flint Creek. He saw that a full 12-grade academy was needed. He saw, too, that this would call for suitable boarding facili-



Pierce Hall sometime after the 1941 addition

ties. Soon after his arrival, he launched a major building program to provide a pair of dormitories, one for girls and one for boys.

The first girls' dormitory may have been started as early as 1936 on land part of which was secured by Elder Isaac Baker, district pastor, from Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rogers. The boys' dorm came a little later. Elder Baker also built Baker Cottage and was allowed the rent until he was reimbursed. The dormitories were used while still in the process of being built. Lockie Gifford says the girls' dorm, still unfinished but in use had a "big barrel" heater in the upstairs hall when she visited the dean of girls at Thanksgiving time (1938). Girls hovered around the stove to dress. (Lockie Gifford's letter to the J. O. Wilsons, dated May 20, 1975.)

Those dorms were not palaces, but they were the best that could be provided at the time; and they met an urgent need. They were built of native oak, available at less cost than softer timber but certainly calling for a good deal more "elbow grease" where labor was concerned. All sawing of those hard boards was by manual power, and driving nails in oak is not child's play. Insulation was mostly by papering the walls and ceilings by Ruby Wilson and her helpers. Anyone who has hung wallpaper knows that hanging paper on the ceiling over your head is not child's play either.



The First Baker Hall

Those two dorms were fittingly named after the two men who had most to do with getting the academy on its way as a full four-year boarding school—the girls' dorm, "Pierce Hall" and the boys' "Baker Hall." When Pierce Hall was demolished about twenty years later to make way for a more modern structure, a good many felt that it was definitely a mistake for the name of that building pioneer to cease to be memorialized in the institution he worked so hard to establish. Certainly Warren D. Pierce should be remembered as one who laid firm foundations for this educational center.

Years later, alumni who had been students under Professor Pierce requested some recognition for his contribution to the school's beginning. So to recognize Warren D. Pierce in some lasting way, the auditorium in the R. E. Callicott Educational Complex was named "Pierce Auditorium" for Professor Pierce. The plaque states: "Dedicated to W. D. Pierce, a pioneer whose personal sacrifice and devotion was a major source of growth to this institution. Served as principal from 1938-1944."

The Class of 1941 appears to be the first class to be graduated with a full four-year high school program. However, the Class of 1940 is recognized as the first graduating class even though they apparently finished only three years of high school work. The members were: Mary Alice Benedict; Lola Marie Diehl; Adaline Erma Lewis, Valedicto-

rian; Betty Ruth Seasley, President; Margaret Esther Wilson. The Class of 1940 is pictured at the right with their sponsor, Carlton Blackburn. They are not necessarily standing in the order listed.)



The Arkansas-Louisiana Conference took over the operation of the school in 1941. Since it was no longer a junior academy, it was now Ozark Academy.

Milton Easley first came to Ozark Junior Academy in 1939. He wrote a school history that was published in the 1944 school annual. We now include this in its entirety because of the valuable insight into the school as it was in those early days.

“I left home, three years ago, for my first year at the Ozark Junior Academy. I was really looking forward to something; but when I was informed while going through a creek in the road, as there was no bridge, that I was then on the campus of O. J. A., I was rather disappointed.

“I was expecting to find two large dormitories with electric lights, running water, and so forth. I soon discovered that we had to use kerosene lamps and sleep in a large room over another one which appeared to be a junk room, but which they said was to be a library later on.

“To add to my discomfort, Professor Pierce came down the first morning I was here and wakened me at six o'clock. Immediately after breakfast I found out that I was to play the part of the running water. Mrs. Pierce handed me a couple of buckets and told me to run down to the pump and fill them up. When I had finished carrying water, Professor Pierce told me to find Mr. Wilson and he would tell me what to do. I finally found him and he put me to nailing on shingles on the girl's dormitory. I guess he noticed that I didn't fit in there, so the next day he told me to lay flooring. I did this a day or two, then went with Elder Baker all over the north end of Arkansas gathering up furniture for the school.

“When the girl's dormitory was completed enough for use, Professor and Mrs. Pierce moved in there, and the Blue Castle, as it was then known, became the home of six of us boys. It was rather amusing to see the girls going to their rooms up a ladder and through a window.

“By this time I had become well acquainted, and when my homesickness was over, I found myself really liking the place.

“When winter came on, the thermometer dropped to twenty below, and since we had burned all the wood, we turned out school and the girls went to bed to stay warm, while the boys went over to Brother (W. H.) Elder’s place and sawed wood in a seven inch snow.

“All the boys in the dormitory except one, used an Aladdin lamp and he used a gasoline lantern. One Sunday morning as I was going through the back porch to get some kerosene to build a fire, I accidentally got John’s gasoline. As I was pouring some out of a can, it caught fire and burned my hand so I threw it down. The wallpaper caught fire, and being so old and dry, burned like powder. Some of the boys began carrying their things out, and others carried water. Amy Winkle, our volunteer fire alarm, screamed a few times, and the neighbors for two miles around came to see what was happening. We finally got the fire put out without much damage, except that Mrs. Pierce almost lost a fingernail from a terrific stroke of the pump handle.

“You should have visited the laundry, where we had two hand washers. One of which belonged to someone who was in a lending mood.

“The next year when I came back, I found that a boys’ dormitory had been built, and there were fourteen of us to live in it. Plans for getting electricity had been made also. Also two weeks after it was finally turned on, we got a new washing machine, and later a new kitchen stove. It was also that year that we moved the printing office from the McCreary basement to the new Print Shop which was built especially for it.

“When I came back this year, I was greatly surprised to see all the improvements, the dormitories were covered with inset brick (siding that looked like brick); the girls dormitory was enlarged, running water was supplied from an electric automatic pump, and the Professor’s house had been built,—but most of all, I was surprised to see the large increase in the student enrollment.

“Surely the Lord has placed and greatly blessed this school at Gentry, the Ozark Academy, and I pray He will continue blessing it as He has in the past.”

Water for washing dishes and clothes and scrubbing floors was carried from the creek or well. Clean water for drinking and cooking was from the well. The well was located in the yard in front of the church. Of course, there was a hand pump.

While Elder Carl Staben was here (he left in 1941), the first deep well was drilled. He also put pipe to the kitchen sink from the well and built a septic tank for the girls’ dormitory. Roy Cole connected up these pipes when he came in July (1941), and this is the date for the first running water to the kitchen.

Byrd Bullard (staff member 1940-49) joined the Ozark Junior Academy staff in 1940 as treasurer and teacher. The office was in Blue Castle and he and Mr. Pierce used kerosene heaters. Sometimes the heaters smoked up the room. Mr. Bullard's safe was an old refrigerator, which was robbed once. There had been a "nut house" added on to the east side of Blue Castle, where they shelled black walnuts for a few years as a school industry. Mr. Pierce had this made into his office, giving him and Mr. Bullard each a room. Now Blue Castle could boast a classroom and two offices.

Broom making was one of the principal industries for a time. Guy Williamson and others fostered this skill for awhile, then Martin Pettey came in 1940 (staff member 1940-73) at the invitation of Warren D. Pierce. He trained a number of young people, both boys and girls, in this remunerative trade. When the broom industry was closed in 1967, Mr. Pettey started the academy bakery as an industry.



Roy Cole joined the staff July 1, 1941, as teacher and building and maintenance man. In the fall of 1942 he borrowed \$300 to purchase a small venetian blind business which he operated until his retirement in 1960. Much of that time he taught part time at the academy and operated the business as well. This was another opportunity for student employment.

Students were able to work in the early industries, but most of the labor was "free labor" since every one was required to work a certain number of hours per week. Only time put in above that minimum requirement was paid for, beginning at about 10 cents per hour.

It is interesting to note that the charge for a dormitory student in 1940 was \$18.75 per month. In 1941, the charge rose to \$25 per month.

A two-story south wing was built onto the girls' dormitory in 1941. This added several student rooms upstairs and a worship room downstairs, besides enlarging the dining room. It also provided room for bathrooms, bringing an end to the girls having their baths in the creek or by using tubs and pans. In 1942, restrooms were added to the boys' dorm. That same year facilities were also installed for using butane gas for cooking and supplemental heat. Ozark Academy was really making progress.

In the 1942 **Flintonian** we find this background for the school paper and yearbook: "The first school papers, published monthly by Ozark Junior Academy, contained interesting reading for those interested in the school. Under such captions as 'Mountain Air,' 'Mountain Music,' 'Listen,' and 'Thoughtful Nothings,' students portrayed life in this

pioneer school. The first volume of the **Mountain Echo** appearing in 1937 had four pages six by ten. In 1940 when the fourth volume appeared it contained four pages ten by thirteen and one-half.

“The second semester staff conceived the idea of publishing a school annual in place of the May issue of the paper. While annuals had been talked of and even started in the past, it was a pioneer project, and it seemed too good to be true when the cuts for the **Flintonian** arrived, and it was certain that the first annual was to be published.” These two publications still carry those names at the present time.

The Ozark Academy Medical Cadet Corps filled the need to train young people for their role in the military as early as the 1941-42 school year. The young people were taught to preserve life rather than to destroy life. The first Girls’ Cadet Corps at Ozark Academy was added 1942-43. The Medical Cadet Corps was active at Ozark Academy into the sixties.



MCC scene in the 1956 Flintonian



H. S. Miller and his class in the early days.



Myrtle Pierce (left) with Home Arts class in the early 1940's.

A principal’s house was constructed while Elder Pierce was principal (see Map B). This allowed Blue Castle to be used for other purposes.

Mrs. Ellen Smith, better known on the campus as “Aunt Ellen,” met the Pierces in El Campo, Texas. She came to live in their home and aided financially in building the principal’s home as well as meeting other needs on campus. She made it possible financially to purchase the McCreary property; the tract north of the campus across the creek and to the east, on an annuity basis. She also helped to enlarge the building that became the store. From the May, 1944, **Mountain Echo** the students were sad to

have her return to El Campo. “She had been Mother, Helper, Advisor, Companion, and Store keeper to the students.”

The McCreary house (pictured right) was used for several purposes— faculty housing, student living quarters, classrooms, etc. The spelling of the name is not certain. Some sources spelled it “McCrary.”



It is quite common for the senior class to leave a gift for the academy that reflects something the students see as a need. The first class gift was made by the Class of 1944. The gift was a 47-foot flag pole and an 8x5' flag.

The students dug the hole (two of them, in fact, before they got the right spot), mixed the concrete, attached guy ropes, and engraved the names of the graduates. The formal dedication service was May 18, 1944.

In 1944, the year of Professor Pierce’s leaving but before he left, cane-bottomed chairs were purchased for the dining room. Up to that time there had been only six chairs—the rest sat on benches made of one-by-four boards, without backs, around the home-made dining tables.



Dining Room, 1948

Sometimes it took real ingenuity and lots of hard work to provide food for the growing boarding family. But those pioneer women serving as food matrons had what it took to deal with such problems. When wild blackberries got ripe in the spring, Mrs. Pierce led a crew of girls out into the briers and chiggers to take advantage of that source of delicious fruit. Myrtle Pierce was no cry-baby, even if she did shed a few tears at the sight of “Blue Castle” as a place to live.

When Mrs. Ruth Pettey was food matron, she found the students grew tired of the too-frequent appearance of roast on the menu, made from yesterday’s left-overs. But scraps of nourishing food must not be thrown away, so Ruth got the idea of making them into soup for supper. And was it good!

Polly Davidson, a student in those careful days, wrote these lines about the menu:

“Four Kinds of Gravy

On Monday we have bread and gravy,
On Tuesday it's gravy and bread;
On Wednesday and Thursday it's gravy on toast—
And of course that's gravy on bread.

On Friday we went to the matron
And asked for something instead.
And—What do you think?—on Saturday morn
It was gravy without any bread.”

(Polly sang this to the tune of “Beautiful Texas” at the Ozark Academy homecoming of June 26-28, 1970.)

The pioneering days sound like it was all hard work and no play. That was not the case, however. After mentioning the natural parks, lakes, and caves for boating, swimming, bicycle riding, and picnicing, the following excerpt taken from a page entitled “Fun” from the 1944 **Flintonian** relates some of the other forms of recreation:



“On the campus, we have a well drained, firm surfaced, basket ball and tennis court, as well as the base ball diamond which was built by the dormitory boys this year. They also bought a basket ball, several new soft balls, and a volley ball and other equipment. This equipment was donated to the school by the boys and girls.

“Social privileges are not lacking on the campus of Ozark Academy. Every Saturday night, there is a social for those who keep up their school work and obey the Dormitory rules during the week. At the socials there is always plenty of entertainment to be had. The Saturday night programs include marches, indoor games and stunts. Several movies were shown by Elder Carter who on his visits brought the motion picture machine from Little Rock. The pictures include news reels, travel, talks, and some cartoon strips....”

Elder and Mrs. Pierce left following the 1943-44 school year to serve for many, many years in Africa. Years later he laughingly said that his years at Ozark prepared him for mission service.

The Critical Years



Mr. **C. E. Kellogg** (1944-45) became principal following Elder Pierce. The broom shop that was in use in 1967 was started in 1943 and completed in 1944 during Mr. Kellogg's principalship. It was not used entirely as a broom shop at first, however. The building was intended to be the laundry downstairs and a woodwork-shop classroom upstairs. Mr. Kellogg moved the library from the building south of the old church to the first floor of this building, which became not only library but chapel and study hall as well. Two classrooms were made upstairs by adding a partition. The south wing was made into a science laboratory and classroom.

For some reason the enrollment in 1944-45 dropped more than 33 1/3 percent. It cost the conference enough for 1944-45 to have sent all the 40 students to Southwestern Junior College, paid their way, and saved money. At the close of the year the vote was to close Ozark Academy for all time, and a few things were sold. But the staff members living in the area got together and decided to ask the Conference to give them a chance to try for a year to operate the school on their own. Permission was granted.

The staff members asked one of their number, **Mrs. Crystal Duce** (1945-46), to serve as principal. She accepted the responsibility and they went to work. They operated that year (1945-46) on a balanced budget. Not only that, but plans were laid for expansion. The military camp at Fort Crowder, Missouri, was being demolished since World War II had ended. Mrs. Duce bought one of their buildings with her own money, salvaged its lumber, and had it brought to the Ozark Academy campus. Plans were made for a new administration building, and ground-breaking ceremonies were held April 9, 1946 (Pictured below). By the end of the school year, the Conference had decided to take over operation of the school again. They bought from Mrs. Duce the material she had secured and arranged for the construction of the building. This experience surely speaks well for the zeal and the administrative ability of this woman principal.



Joseph H. Bischoff (1946-50) came as principal in 1946, but only after he had gotten the powers that be to go all out for OA with financial as well as moral support. During his term the new administration building was constructed and used, though it was not completely finished. The Class of 1948 held its graduation exercises in the chapel of the new building even though it was unfinished. Classes were held in the new Ad



Building soon after school opened for the 1948-49 school year. When it got cold, they just put on more clothes to keep warm. The heating system was not completed until November, 1948. No one complained, however. They were just happy they could move from room to room for classes instead of going from building to building on campus.



Library scene in 1947-48 **Flintonian** before new administration building.

Mr. Bischoff secured one-year provisional approval for a four-year high school program from the General Conference Board of Regents in 1947 and full-fledged approval at a meeting April 6-7, 1949. The academy also received accreditation from the State of Arkansas in 1947. During Mr. Bischoff's administration, the Arkansas Western Gas Co. extended their lines to the Ozark Academy area, making natural gas the heat for all the school plant.



Administration Building



The second church building was built in 1948-49 using materials from a barracks purchased at Camp Crowder. It was built across the road from the old one, on land contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rogers, mostly by volunteer free labor by the church members. Information indicates the total amount of cash spent was less than \$10,000. A seating capacity of about 350 provided for the growing student body and church family.

Years of Development



Joseph Bischoff was followed by **Leon E. Russell** (1950-55) in June, 1950. Elder Russell put the finishing touches on the new administration building; the brick veneer being put on and the restrooms installed. The basement remained unfinished for a year or two and then a woodworking classroom and the cafeteria and dining hall were set up there. The hedge along the walks to the dormitories was planted in 1951.

A new principal's house was built across the road south of the other campus buildings in 1952. The old house was moved and attached to the boys' dormitory along with one of the wings of the old church. This array was not very sightly, but it did make additional space available for the young men.

In 1954 a concrete block shop was built east of the administration building to serve as maintenance shop and auto mechanics classroom. This building was removed when the gymnasium was built in 1965.



Swimming Hole on Flint Creek, June, 1952



Robert Merchant getting ready to show a movie



"Star Gazers" in 1951 **Flintonian**

A new Home Arts Building was under construction during the 1952-55 years. This was to house the Music Department, the kitchen and dining hall, the laundry, and a bakery.

Leon E. Russell was not only an administrator but he also wrote the words of the school song, "That's O.A." The music was written by Florence Marvin.

THAT'S O. A.!

L. E. RussellFlorence Marvin

The image shows a musical score for the school song "That's O.A.!". It consists of six systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are as follows:

Deep in the
There is a
heart of love-ly hills, O-sark A-nd - any nes-les
place I love to see, Where falls are friend-ly as can
still, be. Far from evil r-reat, and null, That's O.-.-
Where Flint creek ex-ists, tran-ces, That's O.-.-
A.-.-.- Where we can walk by rip-pling rills, And hear
A.-.-.- Where all the blue birds sing with glee, Where four
friend-ships form full glad and will free, all hearts with fond
life is Where the Sav-our
mem-ber speaks 'rises to fill me. That's O.-.-.-
That's O.-.-.- A.-.-.-

A new furniture factory was built in 1954 a short distance north of the academy. This was not owned by the academy but did provide labor for a number of students.



Harold Eugene Haas (1955-57) served as Dean of Boys 1949-51, and he returned in 1955 to be principal. The Home Arts building was completed and put into full use during the 1955-56 school year. Mr. Haas also built the amphitheater on the hillside in the north part of the campus. (See page 39 aerial view in 1975.) This provided an ideal place for outdoor worship services and other fair-weather gatherings.



Home Arts Building



By the late fifties it was becoming apparent that larger dormitories would have to be provided if O.A. was to serve all who needed the education and training offered here. Construction on a new boys dormitory began during the 1957-58 school year after **F. H. Hewitt (1957-63)** became principal. A fire in the dorm during the 1957-58 school year speeded up the construction process, and open house for the new dorm was held March 14 and 15, 1959. By the time Elder Hewitt left in 1963, the old oak-lumber girls' dorm, the upstairs of which girls had once entered (for a brief period) via ladder and open window, had been demolished and a beautiful modern brick home for the girls was under construction. The Class of 1958 designed and built a fountain for their class gift. This provided an excellent photo spot and a meeting area for socializing for many years.



Campus lighting has always been important to keep those dark corners lighted. Orville Robertson and Gene Haas admire a light as shown in the 1956-57 **Flintonian**.



Gene Haas and students having fun in the snow south of Baker Hall with additions



1964 Class Officers

Three new homes for faculty were constructed during the 1960 and 1961 summers and the circle drive was graded in 1961.

The first major industry that did much for Ozark Academy was the establishment of a Brandom Kitchen Cabinet branch factory near the school in 1962. They took over the furniture factory building that had been built in the 50's. Brandom Kitchens, headquartered in Keene, Texas, provided work for many students, as well as for numerous parents of students in the area. Brandom's was a major source of support for the school.



Baker Hall completed in 1959

Joshua J. Swinyar (1963-69), Gentry church pastor, became principal. The girls moved into their new home, I. M. Evans Hall, in 1964.



The next major building project was a gymnasium and assembly hall with a seating capacity of about 800. This was constructed in 1965 and was named Callicott Hall in honor of R. E. Callicott, whose generous financial backing had made it and the new girls' dorm possible. According to the **Mountain Echo**, the finishing touches were being made in March, 1966, but was already being used for several events. The first activity in the new gym was dodge ball; and the first program held in the gym was Amateur Hour on February 19, 1966. The Class of 1966 gave a score board for the gym as their class gift.



This school sign was a gift of the Class of 1961.



Girls new home, I. M. Evans Hall

Two duplexes for staff housing were constructed in the late 60's.

January 30, 1969, a fire in the music department gutted the Home Arts building. When it was rebuilt, an additional 1800 square feet was included to enlarge the dining room

and provide more space for a band room below. In October of 1969 the construction was nearing completion. Students from that time remember the trauma of not having breakfast the next morning because of the damage to the kitchen. They were able to use the kitchen, however, to prepare the food after the fire. They put the prepared food on carts and took it to the gym where a dining area was set up.



Gymnasium

Also in January, 1969, another devastating fire destroyed the Brandom Kitchen cabinet factory. This was a real blow to the student labor program at the academy until a new building could be constructed. Construction on the new building began in March of that same year.



H. Dean Kinsey, a 1950 Ozark Academy graduate, came back to his alma mater to be principal (1969-73). The most pressing job facing him upon his arrival was the rebuilding of the cafeteria after the fire of January, 1969. The most pressing challenge during his early administration was financial recovery from the two fires during the previous year—the cafeteria and Brandom Kitchens.

A flight training program began in the fall of 1969, and a new board fence was built in 1970.

The 1972 **Flintonian** lists a number of improvements to the academy campus: “The hill behind the Ad building was leveled off and the dirt used to fill in the gully behind the gym. The new Industrial Arts building was built on the leveled site behind the Ad building, and a new staff home was built on ‘faculty hill.’ Tennis courts were erected by the Student Association. (This was provided by a walk-a-thon held during the 1971-72 school year.) A Campus Master Plan was drawn up and plans for joining Gentry’s sewer system were laid. Scarbrough Ford provided a van for use in transportation of students, ... and the Maintenance Department expanded to about twice its previous size.”



Industrial Arts Center

The master plan provided for the new administration building to be built where it stands today. Moving the hill behind the old administration building was primarily for the new administration building. The Industrial Arts location was sort of a by-product. The Industrial Arts building provided rooms for several classes, including auto mechanics, printing, and woodworking. The van provided by Scarbrough Ford was the beginning of the Ford van usage for Ozark Academy student transportation.

The school joined the Gentry sewer system during the 1972-73 school year with the financial assistance of the McKee family. Two more staff homes were built during Kinsey's administration. Ground work was begun for the Oklahoma Conference to buy into ownership of the academy and become partners with Arkansas-Louisiana, providing some finances for the new administration building.

Emphasis had been placed on integrating black students into the student body. The first African-American student enrolled the fall of 1972. The next year another one enrolled and both of them graduated in 1975. They were both outstanding students who paved the way for those who have followed.



Orlin R. McLean (1973-74 as principal) joined the staff in the fall of 1964 as Bible teacher and counselor. When Dean Kinsey left, the board asked Elder

McLean to step into the principalship. This he did. However, after one year of administration, he decided the classroom was the place for him so he accepted a call to teach at Mount Vernon Academy. On January 24, 1974, the Student Association held a walk-a-thon which provided lights for the football field.



The third church building was dedicated debt free August 10, 1974. This new facility provided improved worship opportunities for the students at Ozark Academy.



Sign on Arkansas 59. This was provided by one of the first alumni fund-raising efforts. Rick Emery led out in contacting alumni in the '70s.



Sign located at the corner of Arkotex Road and Cozy Corners Road that was "doctored" by someone.

Growth Years



Richard W. Bendall (1974-79) was principal during two of the highest enrollment years in the school's history. The opening enrollment for 1975 was 265 and 263 in 1976. The largest graduating class was in 1977 with 75 graduates. The senior class of 1976 had hoped for 76 in '76, but there were only 74 graduates that year. Those were the top years for graduates. One year the girls' dorm housed 110 girls and two mobile homes were brought in for overflow housing for the boys.

During Mr. Bendall's administration the current administration building was erected. This 52,000 square-foot structure houses offices, laboratories, a library and media center, music department, an assembly hall, and classrooms. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the R. E. Callicott Educational Center, took place February 5, 1978. The facility was provided primarily out of the generosity of Mr. Rex Callicott, a real friend of youth.



Rex Callicott



Also during his administration the cafeteria was re-modeled. New chairs were purchased, and the students selected the new carpet. Also, an addition was made to Baker Hall to provide new bathroom facilities for the boys.

Two work-a-thons were held during Bendall's administration. The one held during the 1974-75 school year was to raise funds for a bus. This was the first work-a-thon to be held in one of our schools as far as the administration knew. All the students were involved in community service projects. One group built a house in one day for a man who had been living in a house with a dirt floor, no indoor plumbing, and a roof that leaked. The work-a-thon in 1977-78 was to provide the carillon and bell tower.

In 1976 the Oklahoma Conference joined the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference in bi-conference sponsorship of



Ozark Academy. At this time the name was once again changed, this time to Ozark Adventist Academy. This co-sponsorship continued for several years but was terminated when Oklahoma decided to support two of their junior academies as 12-grade day schools.



The dedication service for the R. E. Callicott Educational Complex was held December 7, 1980 during **Beaman T. Senecal's** (1979-83) administration. Enrollment was high during these years. Four years in a row--1978-79 to 1981-82--had opening enrollments between 260 and 262. Once again there were 75 graduates in the Class of 1980. During the 1982-83 school year Principal Senecal accepted a call to the Oklahoma Conference. To finish out that year vice principals George Fisher, Kenneth Jameson, and David Burghart shared the leadership responsibilities.



Garry J. Sudds (1983-85) saw the next major industry established. Kenneth Jameson, treasurer, led out in the overall planning and opening of the Box recycling industry in conjunction with McKee Foods Corporation. Headquartered in Collegedale, Tennessee, McKee Foods built a branch in Gentry in 1981. The school contracted with them to recycle their case boxes for reuse and take care of cardboard trash. This industry began in 1984 in a rented building in Gentry. Mr. Jameson began working on plans for a new building to house the operation.



Dale R. Kongorski (1985-86) came to OAA from Alaska where he had been conference educational superintendent. He saw the Box recycling industry moved into a new building that was constructed in the field on the other side of Flint Creek. After one year as principal, however, he decided to return to conference work and became the educational superintendent for the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference.



Box Industry Building



C. Paul Rouse (1986-91) came from the principalship of Thunderbird Academy to be principal at OAA. Mr. Rouse was involved with the expansion of the Box recycling industry. Early in the operation Betty Einhelig became the manager and continued in that capacity throughout the years of operation. This industry grew to be a major industry for the academy and provided labor for students for 20 years. Because of a change in the operation at McKee Foods, the contract for this industry is coming to a close in 2004 and a search is in process for a new industry.

A number of campus improvements were made during Mr. Rouse's administration as indicated in the school yearbooks.

1987 **Flintonian** showed pictures of the girls' dorm interior with this narrative: "Evans Hall benefited from a major redecoration this year. New carpeting was installed as a result of fundraising efforts by former principal, Dale Kongorski. A large anonymous donation in August made this possible."

The Class of 1988 and alumni funding provided a new sign for the main entrance to the campus. The girls' dean got a much-needed garage added to her residence in the summer of 1988.



New street lights were erected along the paved driveway in June, 1988. These lights were a significant addition to the campus, both for appearance and safety.



1989 **Flintonian**: "Baker Hall was repainted, recarpeted, and the lobby was remodeled....New wooden benches were added around the bell tower, adding to the beauty of the OAA campus....The student center was furnished with an office and new chairs...."

1991 **Flintonian**: "New chairs in the gym, new drapes for the gym stage, ten new computers, new chairs in the cafeteria, mats for the gymnastics team....all of these things have been popping up around the campus for the past three years....The money is raised by the senior class, alumni, staff and former staff."

Challenging Years



Community service was the emphasis of the administration of **Richard A. Aldridge** (1991-96). He co-taught a Community Service class where students were taught how to serve and then went out into the community to do projects such as painting and repairing buildings, tutoring students at the Gentry High School, and helping to beautify the City of Gentry. During the 1992-93 school year the puppet team was organized. During the 1994 school year, students became involved in an Adopt-a-Kid program where OAA students “adopted” kindergarten students at the elementary school. Students also became involved in an Adopt-a-Grandparent program at a local nursing home. During the 1994-95 school year students went to Houston to help after a disastrous flood.

In October, 1992, a bus barn was completed. All the school vehicles could be parked inside out of the weather. This building also housed a maintenance shop until the building was needed to house an industry operation.



Bus Barn

A new scoreboard for the gym was given as a class gift by the Class of 1995 and alumni.



G. Charles Dart (1996-2002) was called out of retirement for a second time to be principal of Ozark Adventist Academy. “Papa Dart,” as many of the students called him, probably did not intend to be out of retirement for six years. He saw several changes during his administration. The Class of 1997 and alumni provided mailboxes for

dormitory students in the administration building. The new boys’ dormitory, McKee Hall, was completed in 1998. Old Baker Hall continued to be used while three of the wings were built. Students moved into the new dorm, and old Baker Hall was removed so the final wing of McKee Hall could be built. McKee Hall was named in recognition of the funding provided by the O. D. McKee family out of Collegedale, Tennessee. The worship room was named in honor of Dr. Jimmy Sasser who provided the funding for the worship room; but he died before he saw the reality of the completed structure. The new maintenance building was completed on the hill behind the administration building in 2000.



McKee Hall

Once again there was a fire in the cafeteria building. This time, the night of October 17, 2001, the cafeteria burned beyond repair. Staff and community people helped to set up temporary cafeteria facilities in a portion of the bus barn. New equipment was purchased for the temporary facility that could be used when the new building was completed, and plans were drawn up for a new, modern cafeteria. The temporary cafeteria served well for two years.



Cafeteria during demolition process



David A. Branum (2002-03) came from Canada to take on the challenge of seeing the new cafeteria construction proceed. Plans were approved and construction began. Two new parking lots were completed during this school year. Because the new cafeteria building was constructed on one existing parking lot, a new parking lot was built where the old cafeteria had stood. Both that lot and the village parking lot were paved. The

new lot provides a beautiful new entrance to the campus.

Even though Mr. Branum was here only one year, another important accomplishment was realized. The Ozark Parent Association was formed. The purpose of this organization is to give support by the parents through individual effort and financial funding for special projects.



New Parking Lot



Lyle Hansen (2003-) came in the summer of 2003 even though he had decided to retire from the educational system in Texas. He saw the new cafeteria completed and placed into use in December, 2003. Open house was held December 13, 2003. The cafeteria was completed debt-free with insurance money.

Through the efforts of the development director and funding by the alumni and the newly-formed Committee of 100, the R. E. Callicott Educational Center received new carpeting and painting throughout the building during the summer of 2003. This was the first carpet change since its erection in 1978.



New Cafeteria

A new logo was designed in 2003 for school stationery and other uses. The new logo was used during the 2003-2004 school year for a school jacket design. Instead of class jackets there is now a school jacket that is available for anyone to purchase.



A big challenge came in 2004 with a significant drop in enrollment. Heavy emphasis is being placed on student recruitment. Loss of the Box recycling industry is another current challenge to be met. God has been here to help meet challenges in the past so we have faith to believe He will continue to see His school succeed.

Social and Spiritual Activities

In this historical sketch of Ozark Adventist Academy we have dealt largely with the physical plant—with buildings, industries, etc. These are important, of course, but surpassing them are the social and spiritual activities and standards of the school. By far the most important accomplishments of OAA have been in the spiritual realm—in the aid and direction given youth in the development of Christian character and in making decisions for Christ and for eternity. The most lasting influence of principals and teachers has been that which helped the young people under their care to understand the purpose of life and to relate themselves accordingly to their Maker and to their fellow human beings. And we believe this has been the primary objective of all principals and staff members at OAA.

Extra-curricular activities have played an important part in the education of students at OAA. The emphasis placed on music, vocal and instrumental, has had a wholesome effect. Participation in the activities of choir, band, gymnastics, etc., has encouraged social development and has been uplifting.

Attending and taking part in dormitory worship services, assemblies, Sabbath school and church services, week of prayer services; preparing and producing programs for the pleasure and edification of others—all this has given training and developed poise and ability that add greatly to a young person's usefulness in service for others and to one's capacity to enjoy life.



Sunshine Band—1960



1973 Gymnastics Team



1955 Band

Lifelong friendships are formed which cannot be duplicated in any other setting. Incidentally, friendships are formed between young men and young women in a Christian school such as this, that often result in teaming up for a lifetime of service together. OAA has performed well this social phase of its preparation of its youth for happy and useful living.



1969 Graduates Judy Lucas and Gary Davis (left) and Susan Baker and Calvin Hallock (right) represent those couples whose friendships have culminated in a life together through marriage.



1972 Cycle Club

Proof of the Pudding

It has been a long road since students took their baths in the creek, girls dressed by a barrel stove in the dormitory hall (boys had no heat in their dormitory), or girls entered the second floor of their dormitory by ladder through an upstairs window. But at any point along the way, a “core-sampling” of the school would reveal the same concepts of education—a commitment to high spiritual values, a dedication to quality education, and a belief that work and study should go together in the development of students.

The proof of any institution, however, is not in its history but in its product. As of 2003, almost 2,700 young people have been graduated by Ozark Academy/Ozark Adventist Academy since 1940 and at least 35 former OAA students have returned to serve on the staff of their alma mater.

Year by year students have gone out from Ozark Adventist Academy to be leaders and supporters of the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These students have become distinguished denominational workers and successful professional men and women—conference presidents, pastors, missionaries, teachers, doctors, nurses, administrators, etc. Others have gone out to provide Christian homes and services as lay workers for God. It is this spiritual dimension that continues to be the pre-eminent goal that directs the staff and students of this academy.



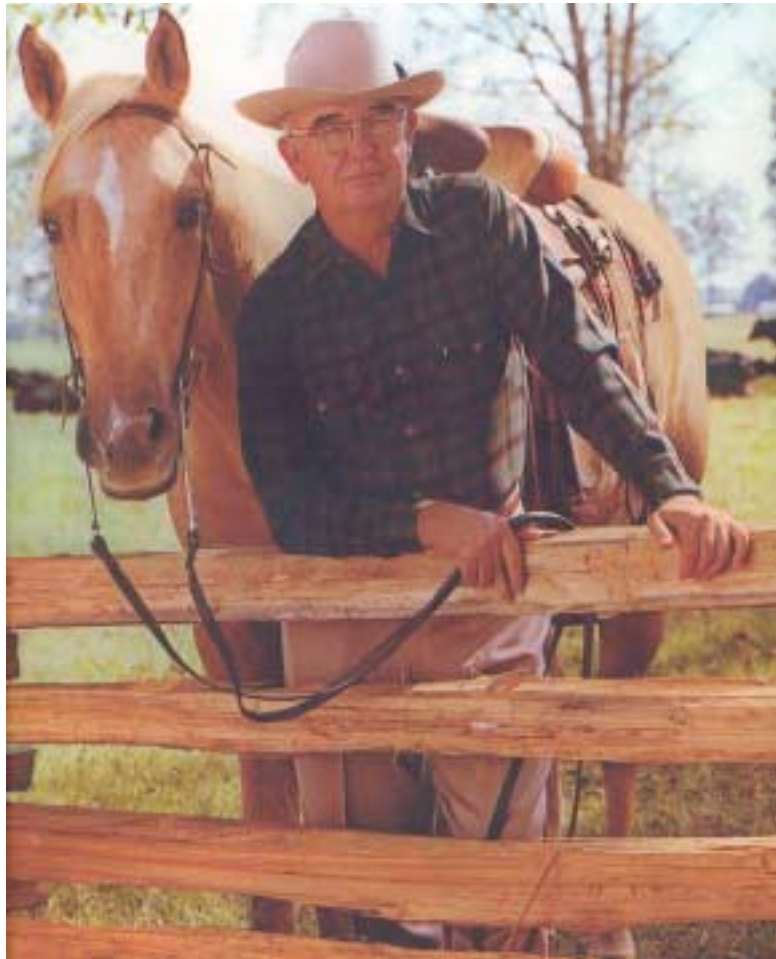
Class of 1977, the first class with 75 Graduates. Only the Class of 1980 has had that many graduating members since then. These are the two largest graduating classes.

A Tribute to Rex E. Callicott

The 1987 **Flintonian** carried this tribute to Mr. Rex Callicott:

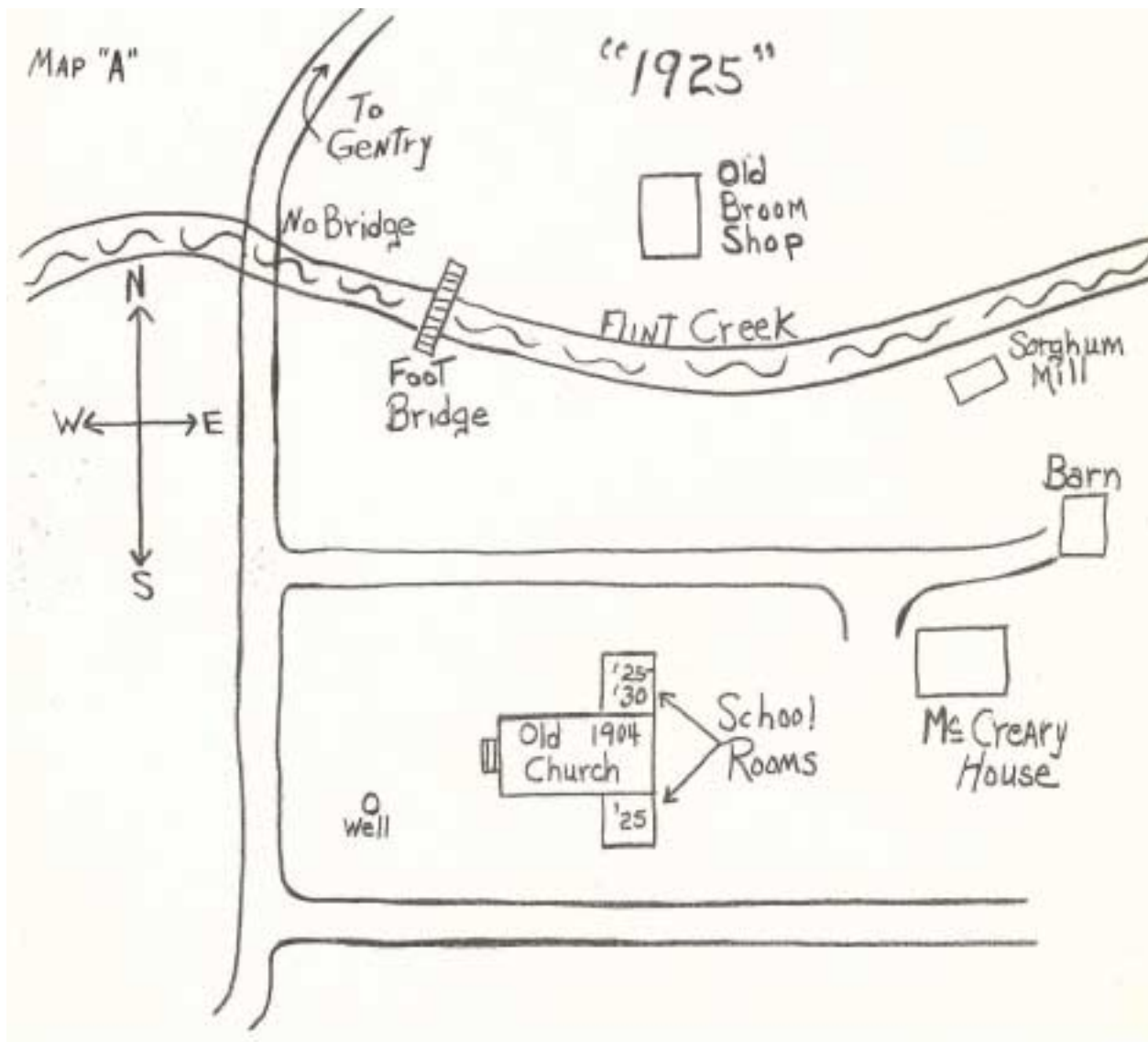
“On February 3, 1987, Ozark Adventist Academy lost one of its dearest friends when Rex E. Callicott passed to his rest. No school had a better friend. A visitor to our campus would see the physical evidence of his love in the buildings he helped to finance, but they would miss the greater of his legacies. They would only see a few of the thousands of young people for whom he made Christian education possible. Many never knew he was responsible because that was the way he wanted it.

“It is impossible in this world to know the number of lives he changed by his friendship and generosity. We will miss his wisdom and his commitment to Christian education. The staff and students of OAA extend to his family our sympathies as they mourn their loss.”

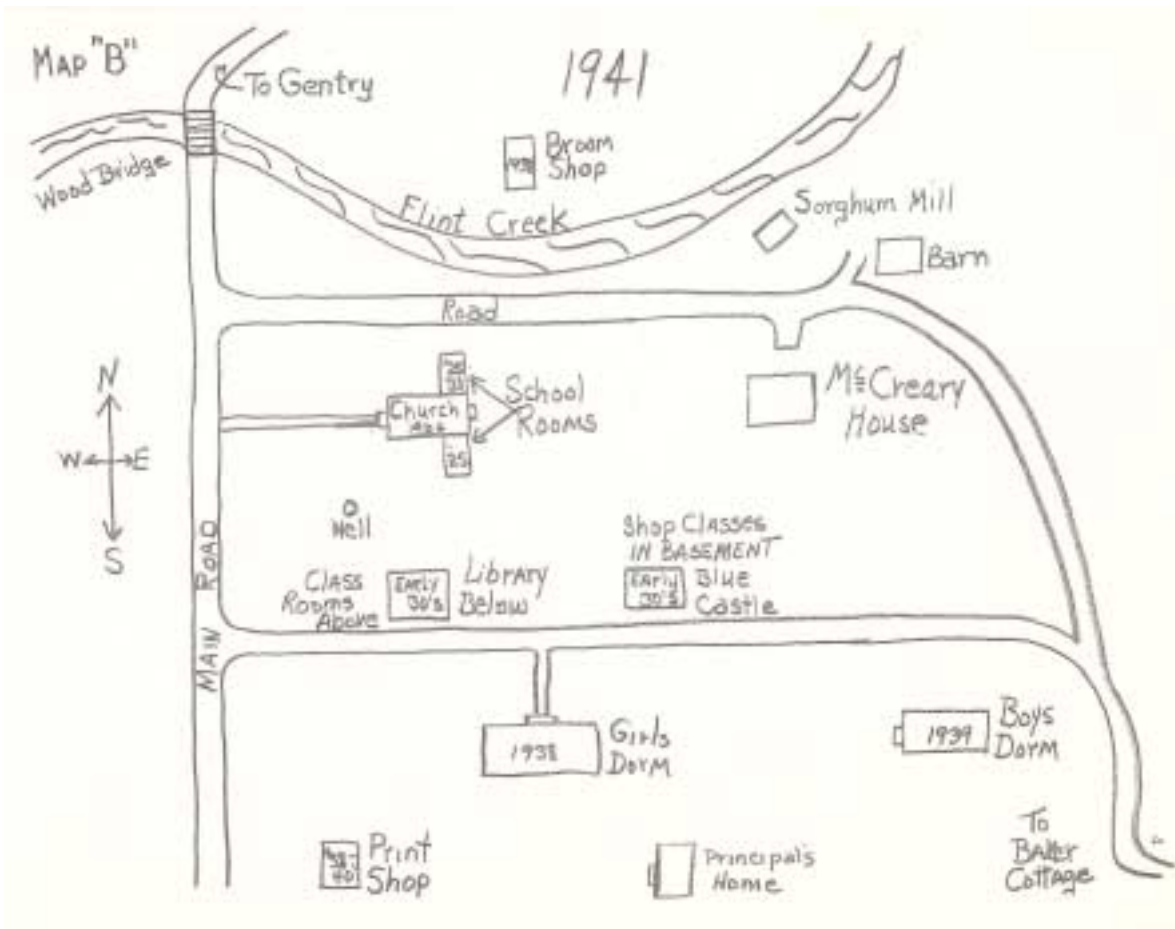


Throughout this history mention was made that significant funding by Mr. Callicott was involved in the building of I. M. Evans Hall, the gymnasium, and the R. E. Callicott Educational Center. There were times also when Mr. Callicott would give a donation in order to keep the board from raising tuition. He indeed helped with buildings and other needs of the academy, but more importantly he was interested in assisting young people so they could receive a Christian education. He said, “bricks and mortar are soon gone, but investing in the youth is building a foundation for the future and leaders for tomorrow.” The above quote from the 1987 *Flintonian* mentions the help given to students directly through scholarships provided by Mr. Callicott. His financial help was not dependent on whether the parents were doing all they could. His philosophy was that the student should not suffer from the parent’s lack of commitment. Students continue to benefit from his generosity through the Callicott Foundation, a foundation formed for this purpose. Each year approximately 50 students continue to receive assistance which enables them to receive a Christian education.

On many occasions Mr. Callicott made this statement: “I give to God with a spoon, but God rewards me with a shovel.” The school administration and staff, students, and parents owe a great debt of gratitude for the generosity of Mr. Callicott.

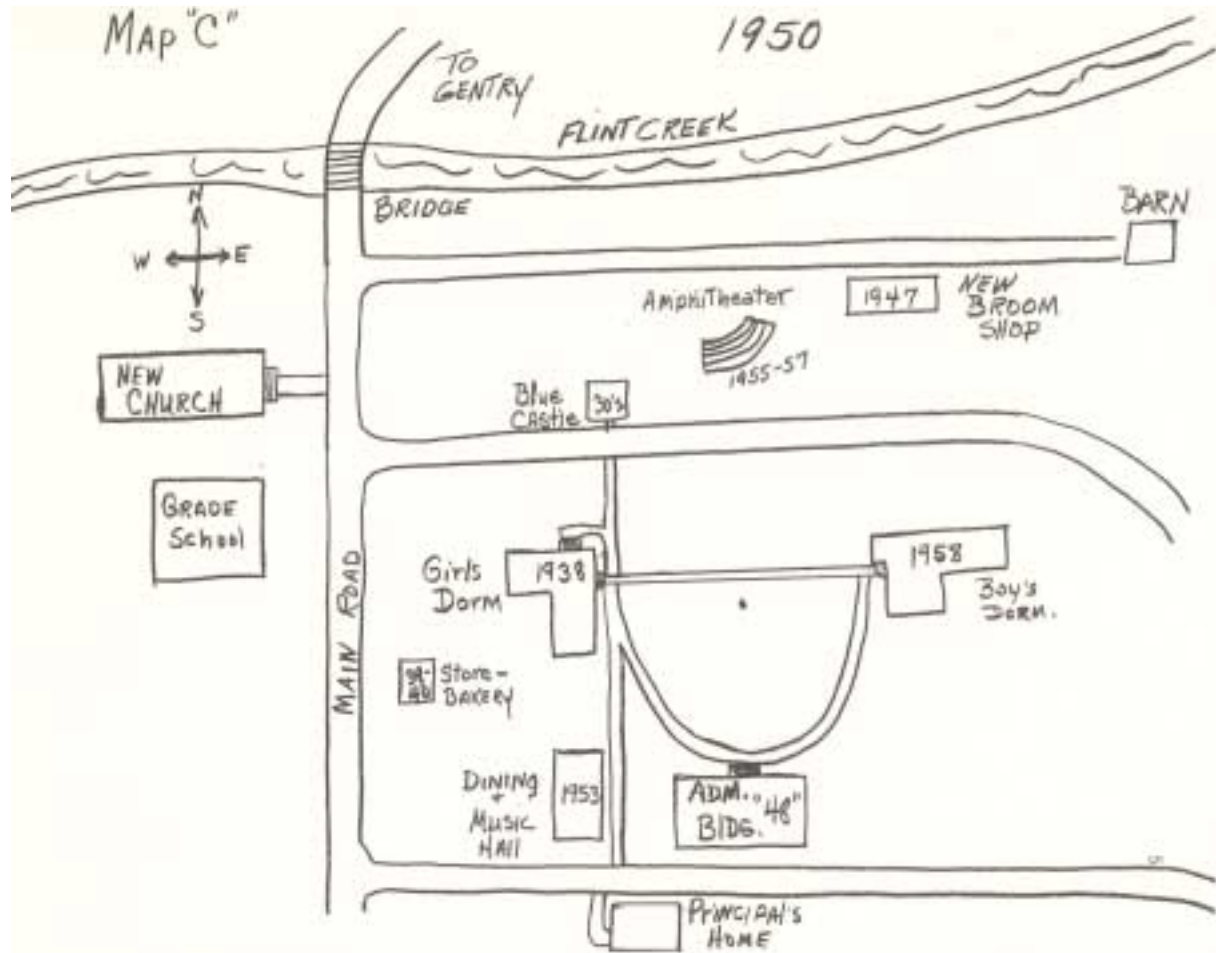


Note: We are sorry that the aerial views were not shot from the same direction that the maps were drawn. This may cause some confusion. The maps were drawn like maps are supposed to be drawn—north at the top. The aerial views vary depending on the approach of the plane. We have tried to identify the direction of the approach.



View in 1946—from the north looking to the south





View October 13, 1951—from the north looking to the south

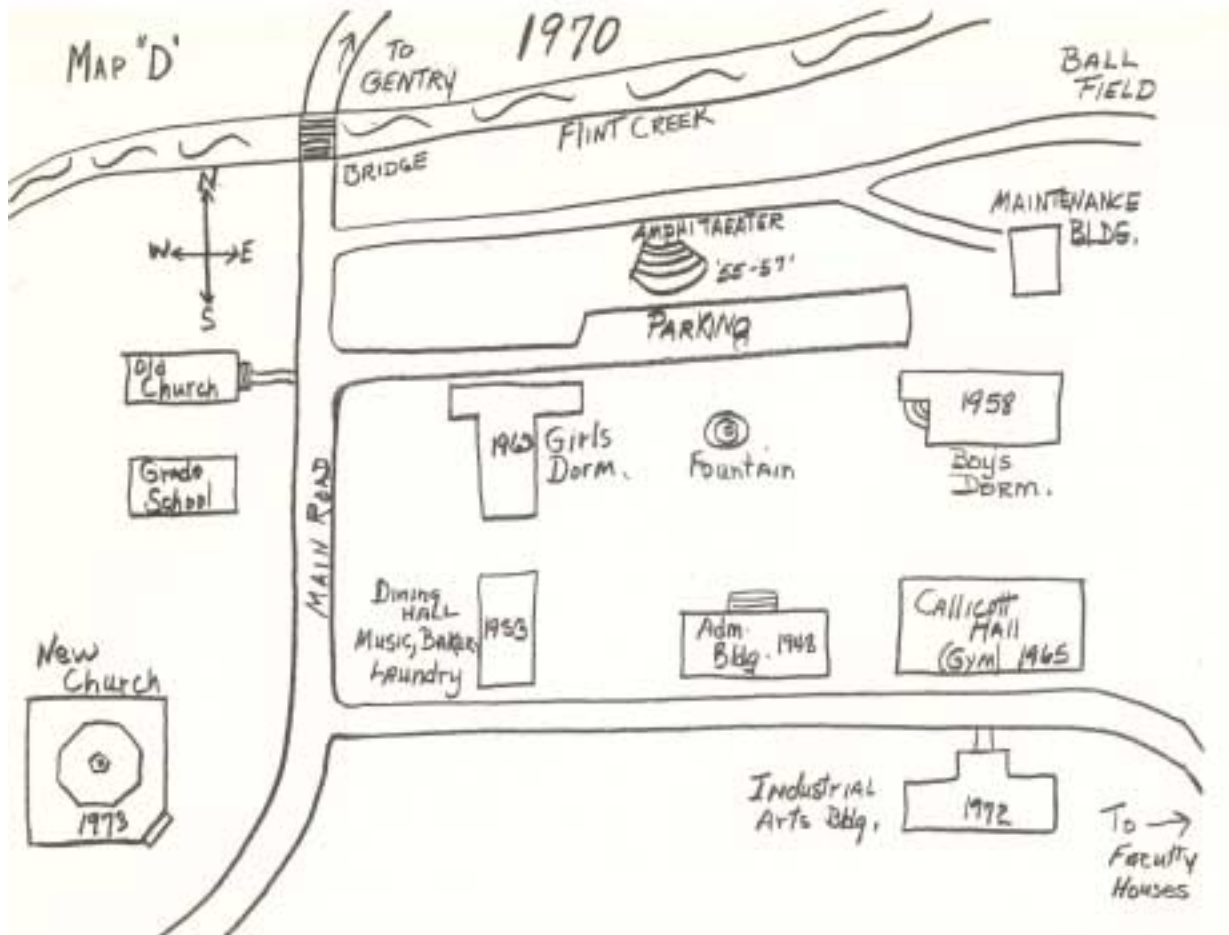


View on September 23, 1964—from the west looking east

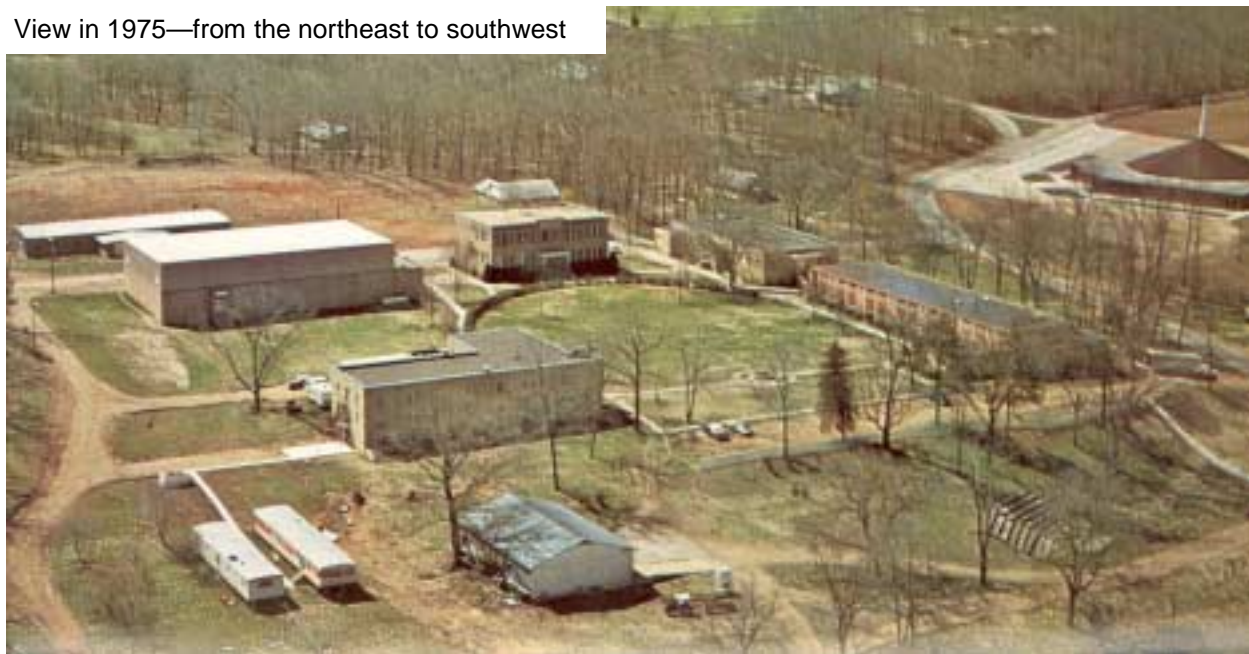


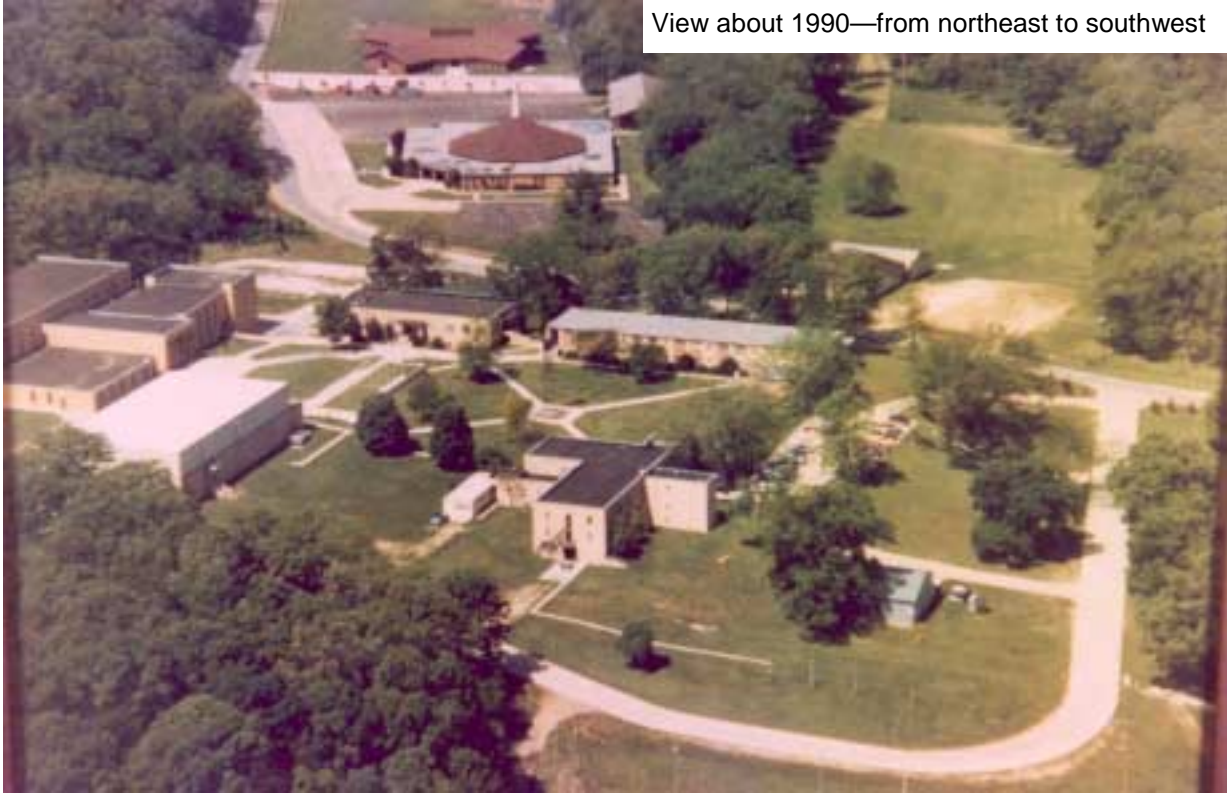
View in the late 1960's—from northwest to east





View in 1975—from the northeast to southwest





View about 1990—from northeast to southwest



View in 2004—from southwest to northeast

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