

Finding Aid to the Benson County Agricultural and Training School Records

Benson County Agricultural and Training School, 1915-1969

Benson County Agricultural and Training School Records, 1946-2017

2.5 linear feet

Collection number: Mss 3039

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Jane Nissen in 2018 (Acc. 2018-011irs).

Property rights: The NDSU Archives owns the property rights to this collection.

Copyrights: Copyrights to this collection is held by the NDSU Archives.

Citation: [Identification of item]. Benson County Agricultural and Training School Records (Mss 3039), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

HISTORY

By 1911, many North Dakota community farmers recognized the need for training youth in the fundamentals of agriculture. On March 6, 1911, a bill was introduced by Senator A.S. Gibbens and Governor John Burke that would allow County Agricultural and Training Schools in North Dakota. As stated in Chapter 265 of the 1911 Session Laws of North Dakota, the establishment of these schools would become effective on July 1, 1911.

In 1912, a petition was signed and presented to the Benson County Board of Commissioners to ask the Benson County community to vote for establishing a county agricultural school during the June primaries. The State's attorney advised the Commissioners to deny the petition as it did not comply with the provisions of the law. A new petition was signed and the community voted in favor of establishing the Benson County Agricultural and Training College on November 5, 1912.

According to Chapter 265 of the 1911 Legislature, the purpose of the school was originally planned to give instruction in agriculture, domestic economy, manual training, and to train teachers for rural schools. County commissioners were authorized to levy as much as \$20,000 but no less than \$10,000 to use in the construction of buildings, grounds, and equipment. After the school was established, it was to be maintained jointly by the county and the state, each contributing one-half of the cost of operation.

The State Superintendent, president of the North Dakota State Agricultural College, and three farmers made up the Board of Directors that would create the course of study in the school. The first principal of the Benson County Agricultural and Training School in October of 1914 was William Jackson; there were a total of four teachers and seventy-six children. By 1915, Frank Cowing took over as the new superintendent until A.T. Felland stepped in by March 1919. Superintendent A.T. Felland spent the next twenty-six years developing a school devoted to farm education under the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917.

Superintendent Felland provided a leaflet called *The Benson Booster* to update patrons quarterly on the progress of the school as well as any modern farming techniques recommended by the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo, N.D. The first annual student publication was created in 1923, called the *Bensonian*. A monthly four-page school paper called *The Bobcat Echo* started in 1947, and the official school yearbook *The Bobcat* started in 1946.

Thomas Tate replaced A.T. Felland as superintendent in 1945 for the next fifteen years. During this time, a new two-story boy's dormitory was built housing students on the top floor and the main floor dedicated to farm shops. He upgraded the campus by improving landscaping and renovating all the classrooms. Enrollment in the Benson County Agricultural and Training School (BCATS) increased in 1947 when the Maddock High School discontinued and those students were sent to BCATS.

Leonard Wick was the last superintendent of the school from 1963 to 1969 when the school and grounds were purchased by the Maddock Special School District No. 9. A new school was built behind the BCATS building in September 1968 and became known as the Maddock Public School, accommodating all twelve grades. The Benson County Agricultural and Training School was demolished June of 1969.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Benson County Agricultural and Training School records are organized into five different series according to content.

The **Notebooks, Playbooks, and Handbooks Series** includes two school playbooks along with their program and a book entitled *Handbook for Recreational Leaders* that was published in 1936.

The **Reunion Series** consists of newspapers clippings of the names of attendees, a class reunion certificate, and a program of events and correspondence for the Maddock all school reunion of 1989.

The **Yearbook Series** consists of three Bobcat yearbooks from the school years between 1946 and 1950.

The **Future Homemakers of America Series** consists of a folder of correspondence pertaining to the state conventions and banquets between 1947 and 1950. There are both typed and handwritten letters, a red felt badge along with the pamphlet to the FHA Fifth Annual Convention May 1950, school programs, booklets, and an article from 1951 of graduating members.

The **Newspaper Series** consists of newspaper clippings, full issues, and student publications from the 1940s. There is a folder of news clippings regarding Cliff Simek who was an Ag Mechanic instructor of the school for 36 years. *Benson County Farmers Press* printed an article about the history of the school in 1969 that is very informative.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder Content

Box 1

1/1 Finding aid

Notebooks, Playbooks, and Handbooks Series

1/2 Two notebooks about food and clothing, 1940s
 1/3 *Handbook for Recreation Leaders*, U.S. Department of Labor Children's Bureau, 1936
 1/4 *The Adorable Imp* playbook and program, 1948
 1/5 *Almost Eighteen* playbook and program, 1950

Reunion Series

1/6 Maddock All School Reunion, June 24, 1989
 1/7 Newspaper clippings with BCATS Reunion attendees, 1999-2003
 1/8 50th Anniversary Class Reunion Certificate, 2000

Yearbook Series

1/9 Bobcat Yearbook, 1946-1947
 1/10 Bobcat Yearbook, 1947-1948
 1/11 Bobcat Yearbook, 1950

Future Homemakers of America Series

- 1/12 State Conventions and Banquets, 1947-1950
- 1/13 Folder that contained state convention and banquets information

Newspaper Series

- 1/14 Newspaper clippings about Cliff Simek, 2005

Box 2

- 2/1 *The Bobcat Echo; The Benson Booster*, 1940s
- 2/2 *The Bobcat Echo*, 1946-1947
- 2/3 *The Bobcat Echo*, 1948-1950
- 2/4 *Benson County Farmers Press* article about the history of the school, 1969
- 2/5 *Benson County Farmers Press*, 1986, 2004, 2017
- 2/6 *Minot Daily News* article about Robert Rindt, 2010