

## History of Port Orange Elementary

In 1879, Port Orange families paid by subscription to provide for group schooling rather than home schooling for the area's children. Classes were small and the furniture was crude. The first school building was located on Halifax Drive where the Port Orange Civic Center is now located. J.B. Case, who also worked by subscription, was the first teacher at the Port Orange School. He came to Port Orange after teaching at the Tomoka Settlement. After teaching in primitive quarters without standardized books, Case oversaw the construction of a new one-room schoolhouse in 1889. This new building was located on the southwest corner of Dunlawton and Orange Avenues and was used for several years until the coming of the railroad. The J. Voss family deeded the property on which the school stood to the Volusia County School Board and in 1896 the school was renovated. By 1908, the school population had outgrown the one-room school and another room and cupola were added.

In 1925 a new brick school was built on the same three and one half- acre site at 402 Dunlawton Avenue and opened to students in 1926. The two room school with the cupola was moved to a spot directly west of the original site. Prior to 1925, several buildings including the Methodist Church were temporarily rented for use as classrooms to accommodate the growing student population. In 1942, during World War II, the Port Orange school was enlarged. The old wood frame building was again moved to accommodate the new wing. The old building was used for Music, Art and a cafeteria. Harold Cardwell, local historian and former Port Orange student recalled the May Day programs with a king, queen and a maypole. He remembered the Halloween fair the school held each year with the students bobbing for apples and chasing a greased pig. Cardwell said that when the students had to go to Mr. Sandsbury's (long time Port Orange principal) office they could see the peach tree switch hanging over his door. He didn't recall anyone getting paddled but the switch so prominently displayed was certainly a major deterrent to misbehavior. Sandsbury arranged for a 'chapel program' every Friday in the auditorium. Mr. Cardwell said that the name was a misnomer because the programs were not of a religious nature but on a variety of interesting topics. On one occasion some speakers who worked in local industry brought in various machines like a washer and stove and explained their inner workings

to the captivated student audience. During his years as a Port Orange student, Cardwell also recalled the beauty and wonderful color of the phlox that came up each year behind the school.

Another addition to Port Orange Elementary was built in 1954. The first Port Orange school, built in the early 1900s, was still being used for classrooms in the 1950s and 1960s. Lynn Gold Shafer and Kathy Ailman taught in the old structure as did kindergarten teachers Dorothy Brown and Shirley Wadsworth. The city of Port Orange had a population explosion in the early 1970s and, with the help of portable classrooms; Port Orange Elementary served all Port Orange students until Spruce Creek Elementary was built in 1981. While many of the children were still housed in portables Shirley Wadsworth, former school secretary, kindergarten and first grade teacher at Port Orange, recalled that a train derailed one morning when the students were coming to school. She said that had it not been for the fence that separated the school grounds from the railroad, the derailed train would have bumped right into a portable classroom. Prior to building Spruce Creek Elementary, Port Orange Elementary grew so large that classes were also held at Riverview Elementary to accommodate all the students. It was originally thought that Port Orange Elementary would be torn down when the newer schools in the area were built. But faculty and parents, however, persuaded the school board to keep the school open. Three other elementary schools were built in the 1980s and early 1990s to handle the increased number of school age children in the Port Orange area. Presently, Port Orange Elementary, home of the Tigers, serves approximately 400 students. Besides regular education classes K through five, Port Orange has an ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) class and a variety of ESE (Exceptional Student Education) classes including classes for gifted children.

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