

The Girl Who Built Romney High School

We are often told as young people that we can change the world if we believe in something strong enough. Not all of us are presented with that opportunity but occasionally the right moment comes along, and it is up to us to seize it.

Such was the case of a 13-year-old girl from Romney in 1914. When one goes back in the history of Hampshire County education you have to realize education was only available free of charge through graduation from the eighth grade. After that, there were a number of academies open to mostly men, sometimes girls, but for a cost. Thus “higher” education was open to those families that could afford it.

The need for a public high school became a local topic of conversation in Romney since other towns had constructed or had plans to construct schools, i.e., Paw Paw and Moorefield. Mr. O. W. Snarr, principal of the current school, held the eighth-grade commencement in the auditorium of the W. Va. Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Mr. Snarr had previously attempted to gather the support for a public high school, but it wasn’t accepted by the populace.

Enter Daisy Goldsborough, a loquacious 13-year-old, fearing her education would be over with the eighth grade, arose, and read her essay. From the June 14, 1933, Hampshire Review, “J. J. Cornwell had consented to make an address on behalf of a high school. But when he had heard the paper read by Daisy Goldsborough, it caused him to change the address which he had prepared. He, too, made an eloquent appeal for the young people, pleading with the board and the tax payers present to grant their request for a new high school.”

From the May 24, 1950, Hampshire Review, Impressions by Margaret Inskeep Keller, “The Goldsborough paper focused attention on the matter and public interest and support was further stimulated by newspaper editorials and articles and by general discussion...”.

The public responded quickly to the impassioned plea and when the general election was held in six months, there was a school levy on which to vote. The levy passed in every district, so plans moved forward. After months of discussion, the Board of Education decided to delay construction for completion for the 1916-17 school year. In September of 1916 the building was not completed so

classes were held in the Bank of Romney and Wirgman buildings. Finally on January 2, 1917, the school was completed, and students could walk through the doors.

Two weeks later the building was dedicated. Governor-elect Cornwell and others were reported to have spoken but there was no mention of Daisy.

Commencement for the first graduating class of Romney High School was scheduled for the week of May 20, 1918. Taking a page of our current situation, the County Health Department stepped in and limited all activities due to a severe outbreak of smallpox in the county. Even though there were many restrictions posted in the local paper, the commencement exercises were held.

And guess who a member of the first graduating class? Yes, it was Daisy Goldsborough, whose tenacious effort and impassioned plea created the school from which she graduated.



Romney High School Class of 1918
L to R: Katharine Stump, Brady Moreland Stone, Arthur Peterson, Lucille Orndorff Perkins, Daisy Goldsborough Houser. This was Romney High's first graduating class, according to Nell King and daughter, Pat York.

Other members of the class of 1918 were Katherine Stump, Brady Moreland, Arthur Peterson, and Lucille Orndorff.

The previously mentioned by Margaret Keller was the only time I could find any mention of Daisy's efforts for the beginning of Romney High School. Daisy didn't waste much time after graduation and began teaching in the 1919-20 school year. She continued to teach until 1925 when she enrolled in Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Daisy continued teaching in the area and was mentioned

teaching in Elk Garden in 1931 for three years.

In a list of "Pioneer Teachers of Hampshire County" from July 25, 1951, Daisy was listed in Keyser with an asterisk beside her name. It signified "the person to still be teaching and having been engaged in the profession for a third of a century or longer."

Somewhere along the way she acquired the nickname of "Dimp". She eventually married George Claudius "Pete" Houser sometime after 1930.

“Dimp” was a teacher and she and her husband Pete were business owners of a hatchery, motel, and gas station located at the east end of Romney. Daisy and her husband, Pete, lay side by side at Indian Mound Cemetery.