

Running Kindergarten "Has Been

Has Touched Lives of Thousands

Bassett Kindergarten Is DeKalb County Landmark

Thirty-four years ago a dedicated Decatur lady began kindergarten classes for her young son. Today the school she founded is the oldest established private kindergarten and nursery school in DeKalb County.

The Bassett Kindergarten and Nursery School located at 304 Sycamore Street in Decatur is now a DeKalb County landmark.

Mrs. Reba J. Bassett, founder and present director of the school, has touched the lives of thousands of DeKalb Countians. Today she teaches sons and daughters of some of her first pupils.

The school has been located at its present site since 1949. The first Bassett Kindergarten was located on Clairmont Avenue. Later the school was moved to 635 Sycamore Street and then to its present address.

One of First

Mrs. Bassett was one of the first people in this area to see the need for early formal training for children. In 1929 she was faced with the decision to either move to Atlanta to provide kindergarten training for her son Hunter, who is now a Methodist minister in Brunswick, or open a kindergarten of her own. Fortunately for Decatur and DeKalb County she chose the latter.

Although kindergartens were little heard of in the South at that time, Mrs. Bassett quickly built the enrollment of her school. The first full class was limited to 18 five-year-olds.

Mrs. Bassett fondly remembers her first "outside" pupil, Claude Hamilton, who graduated from West Point and later taught at the military academy.

Many of Mrs. Bassett's pupils went on to successful careers and

she is very proud of this fact, although she declines to take any credit for it.

"Their own personal backgrounds had much to do with their success," she said.

Former Pupils

Edgar Bowers, now an instructor at the University of California, was a member of the first class. So was Lynn Ramspeck, daughter of former Congressman Robert Ramspeck.

Mrs. Bassett is reluctant to mention names, there have been so many.

"It has been a wonderful privilege for me to help give them that first step into the outside world," she said.

Mr. and Mrs. Clark Harrison of Decatur were both Bassett pupils. She is the former Frances Guess.

Father James Harrison, headmaster at St. Pius X in Atlanta, is a former pupil.

Edwina Davis, Atlanta Journal Science Editor, is numbered among the women who attended Mrs. Bassett's School.

Mrs. John Goree of Decatur holds the distinction of being the only person ever to receive an honorary degree from Mrs. Bassett's school. Her husband and both of the Goree children are Bassett graduates. Mrs. Bassett conferred the honorary degree to make it unanimous.

The original fee at the Bassett school was \$5 per month. One mother sent \$7.50 and when Mrs. Bassett attempted to return the \$2.50, the mother told her to please keep it because the job she was doing was "worth it". Inflation hasn't affected the Bassett School much. Parents now pay only \$20 a month for their children.

Mrs. Bassett ran the school by herself for the first eight years. As more and more parents enrolled their children the need for assistants became a must.

Four Teachers Now

Today there are four other teachers in the school. They are Mrs. Dorothy Plunkett, five-year olds;



MRS. EMMA RAY LENDS HELPING HA

Clockwise: Leslie Wilson, Misty Williams, Mark Mille

Mrs. Edith Bassett, four-year olds; Mrs. Emma Lou Ray, three-year olds; Mrs. Annie Ruth Folkes, general assistant.

Child's Attitudes Formed

Mrs. Bassett feels that it is in the kindergarten years that a child's education", she added. In kindergarten that the child's attitudes are formed. Mrs. Bassett conferred the honorary degree to make it unanimous.

Two former teachers, Mrs. Oleta Entrekin and Mrs. Irma Davis, now run kindergartens of their own. A few years back, Mrs. Bassett felt that the school was becoming too large to do its job effectively. More than 120 pupils were enrolled. Now there are 53 children enrolled in the school. Most of them attend all day.

Mrs. Bassett has "preached and worked" for the worth of kindergarten training most of her life. She was a pioneer in the field in this area.

"Kindergarten is a very necessary part of a child's education," she said.

"It is the most essential year in

Mrs. Bassett said she is grateful that the churches have taken interest in kindergarten work she had high praise for the "fine church kindergartens" in Decatur and DeKalb County.

"I hope to see the day that Decatur and DeKalb County school systems have kindergarten. That's where they really belong," Mrs. Bassett said.

Mrs. Bassett, a native of Tyngsboro, Mass., came to Decatur to teach in the public school system. She is a graduate of Georgia College for Women.

104 Church Street

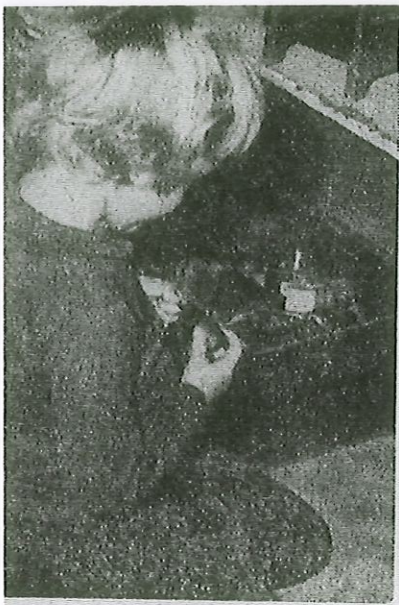
DR. WALLIS REAGIN
OPTOMETRIST

DR 8-3694

DR. VIC H. BROOKS
CHIROPRACTOR

2325 East Lake Rd., Decatur

DR 7-4424



TO 3-YR-OLDS.

and Jimmy Eaton.

ville and has done further study at Emory, the University of Georgia and Toledo (Ohio) University.

She was the first president of the DeKalb County Kindergarten and Nursery Association and has led the cause to elevate the standards of Georgia kindergarten and nursery schools.

The level of kindergarten education in the state has been raised considerably through the efforts of Mrs. Bassett and other dedicated individuals of like mind.

Her comment: "It has been an interesting and wonderful life."

Those attending the Bassett School this year are:

Three-year-olds; Jim Cobb, Jimmy Eaton, Mark Finklestein, Kathryn Hart, Sharron McClurkin, Mark Miller, Gay Perkins, Alan Reich, Mark Vorderbrug, Misty Williams, Leslie Wilson, Trina Hodges, Holli Wheeler, and Kitty McChesney.

Four-year-olds: Mark Brittain, Vickie Blalock, George Brodmerkle, Jimmie Bynum, Harris Carver, Kimberly Duke, Farren Elliott, Jonathan Hudson, Albert Kattine, Allison Lowe, Jeff Patterson, Karen Payne, and Spike Sweatt.

Five-year-olds; Robin Alexander, Susan Berkowitz, Marshall Boozer, Carol Broadwell, Dennis Brock, Skeeter Bush, Herbert Cobb, David Dearman, Pat Griffith, Mike Hammock, Votory Herec, Leslie Hollowell, Rinnie Hodges, Roger Jackson, Shirley Mallison, Alan Miller, Linda Norris, Tommy Root, Cindy Shriber, Kevin Smith, Tommy Shriber, Kevin Smith, Tammy and Laurie Wilson.



IT'S FUN AND THEY LEARN BY DOING

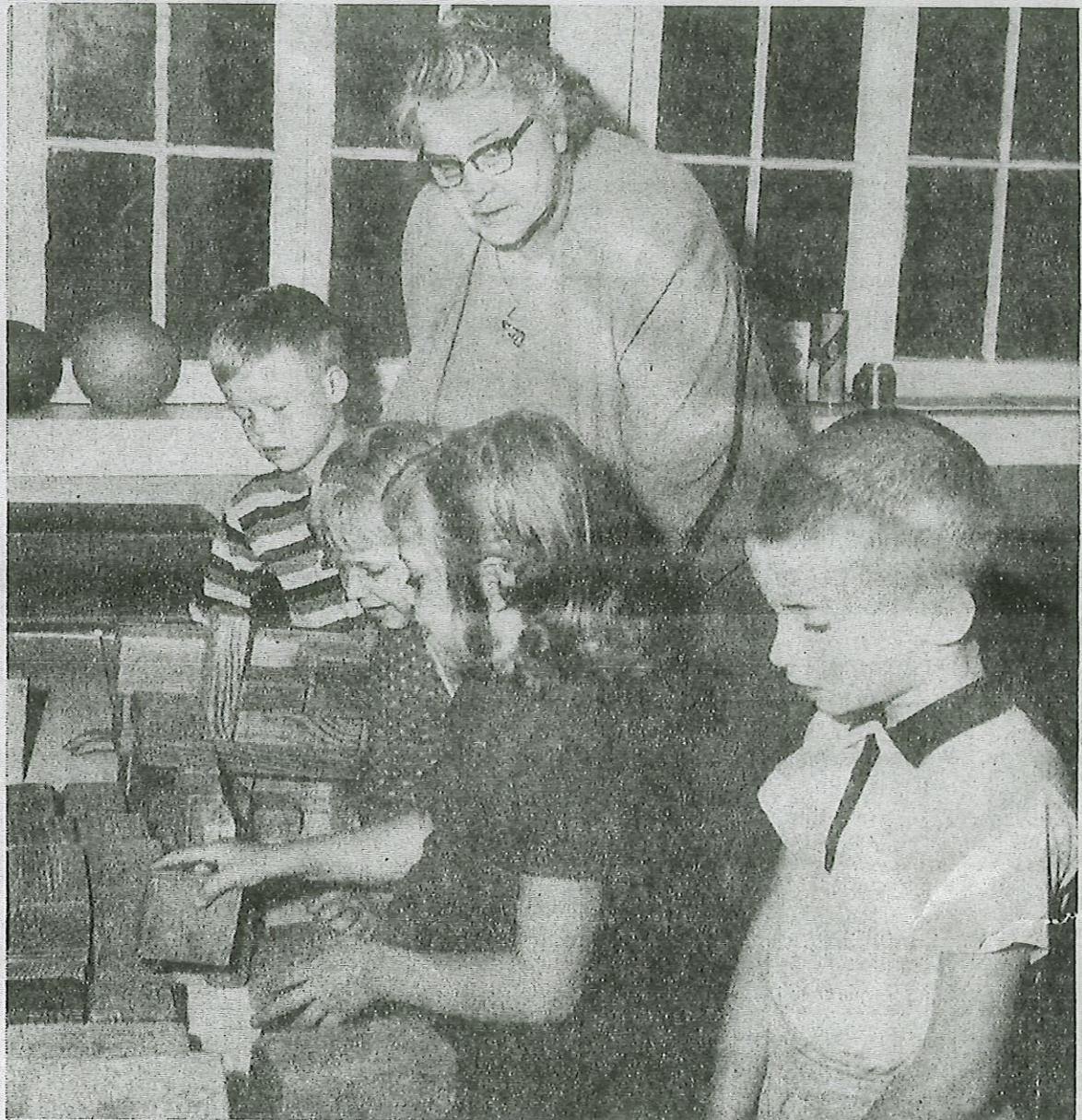
L. to r.: Kevin Smith, Tammy Spence, Leslie Hollowell and Alan Miller, Mrs. Bassett.



FOUR-YEAR-OLDS PUZZLED BY PUZZLES

L. to r.: Karen Payne, Mrs. Edith Bassett, George Brodwell, Mark Brittain and Harris Carver

Interesting and Wonderful Life"



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