

The Ohio Masonic Home  
P. O. Box 120  
Springfield, Ohio 45501  
8/27/79

Dr. Martin L. Stahl  
Superintendent of the South-Western  
City School District

Dear Sir:

My name is Grover C. Davis and I am writing you a little bit about the beginning of athletics at Grove City High School. This took place in 1907. The boys in school at that time got tired of playing the games that were being played and began to think more about baseball, track, basketball and getting a high school band started. All the boys knew more about baseball so that sport was our first venture. The high school had a teacher by the name of Mr. Clay Neicewander who had played with the Grove City team at shortstop and was a very fine ball player. We also had a lady high school teacher, by the name of Miss Adda Harbarger a graduate of physical education from Ohio State University.

Mr. Neicewander surely knew his baseball. We started to practice in 1907 and all were started the hard way. Baseball, track, basketball and enough boys to start a band.

Mr. Neicewander saw Mr. Bill Fa<sup>5</sup>ct who had a fine ball team mostly from Columbus that played for Grove City on Sundays and a fine ball diamond also and he gave the high school team the use of the grounds for practice and all our games. Mr. Fa<sup>5</sup>ct was from Derby, Ohio. All during 1907 and 1908 he taught the fine points of the game such as how to get away from the plate after hitting the ball - how to bunt - how to get your lead to steal bases - how to slide, when and how to hook slide - when to go head first - how to hold your bat when bunting and when you went on the field to be sure and know which way the wind was blowing and many more other things that came up in a ball game.

He also taught our catcher how to use the big mitt and tag runners out at the plate and by the way I have seen many Grove City catchers catch, as I lived on Woodlawn Ave. just a stones throw from Windsor Park ball grounds and I think outside of Worthington, our catcher on that first ball team, Earl White, was one of the best catchers Grove City High School ever had. He was fast, could hit, throw, bunt and wasn't afraid of the devil himself when base runners were trying to score and also a fine base runner. I, Grover Davis, did the pitching and could throw most pitches that are used today, only under different names except the fork ball. I also could throw the spit ball which is outlawed today and had pretty good control of it.

We practiced all through 1907 learning the different plays and what to do with the ball in these plays as they came up. In 1908 we played some scrub games when we could round up enough outsiders to make two teams and Mr. Neicewander looking on to tell us our good and bad plays and how to correct them. By the last of the summer of 1908 our team had become a very good ball team. We played and practiced until late in the fall and Mr. Neicewander said he was very proud of us and in the spring of 1909 when we were juniors he said now you are on your own, get out there on the diamond and show me how much

you have really accomplished.

We got up a pretty good schedule with some small schools and some large schools, such as West, East, and South. We won over West and that was at the time Billy Southworth was catching for West High School. West never did win over us. East won over us in a tight game, 3-1. I can't remember the South score, except we lost by a very close score. Billy Southworth later became a fine outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals and later managed the Columbus Red Birds for the Cardinals.

Dr. Stahl, if you are acquainted with Gov. John Bricker ask him if he remembers the tight ball games in high school between Grove City and Mt. Sterling. Both cities had fine high school teams, but Mt. Sterling never could win over us although they had a very fine club. Governor Bricker later caught for the Ohio State baseball club. Tell (Davis) him I am the little guy that did all the pitching. Our schedule was a home and home game each year. Here are the names of all the players that played on that first Grove City High School team: Earl White, catcher; Grover Davis, pitcher; Pearl Nichols, first base; George Devault, second base; Allen Grant, short stop; Arthur Spillman, third base; Earl Breckenridge, left field; Ed Hensel, right field; and John Linebaugh and Floyd Delashmutt, center field. We about broke even our first year as juniors. Our senior year everybody was more mature but we held our own with the best teams we played. About ten days after our high school season was over the manager of the Derby, Ohio team that played for Grove City on Sundays, and who had a very fine team most of which was from Columbus, came to see Earl White and myself (Grover Davis) if we would like to be the battery for the game coming up next Sunday which was about three days away for his team. Of course, we were tickled to death to get such a chance as that and on the following Sunday we were ready as we had worked out some every day. The team they were playing that day was a very fine team known as the M. C. Lilley and Company. They were a large uniform manufacturing company from Columbus, Ohio, made uniforms of all kinds, name it and they would make it and they always had some of the best baseball players in the city. The game got under way and not many runs were scored, but M. C. Lilley went hitless and scoreless. I had pitched a no hit scoreless game against a very good ball club. My catcher, Earl White caught the best ball game of his life as I only shook off his signals a very few times.

During all this time we were thinking about a track team, but could find only four boys who would put on the trunks. Our coach, Miss Harbarger, said she wanted to get us ready for the State High School meet at Ohio State when we were seniors.

The boys worked hard to get ready for the meet and so did our coach. She taught us many things about running, how to save your energy, the way to use your arms and legs, how to set your pace, and if someone passed you running rather fast at first do not change your pace at that time because it will take something out of him that he will need at the finish of his run. We ran in the mile, quarter relay race, each of us ran a quarter of mile. And we really thought we could win. The time came for the start of the relay race and we lined up with Frank Weygandt leading off, then Floyd Delashmutt second, then Grover Davis third and Earl Breckenridge last to do the finish. All of the first three men gave the last or fourth man the lead but lost by a whisker. We all were heart-broken but somebody had to win.



We all congratulated their team on winning and they in turn congratulated our team for doing so well on our first race, but this was to be our only start and the beginning of track team at Grove City High School.

When we went back to school for our senior year, a new high school had been built and that gave the boys a place to start a basketball team. The first floor had a hallway running through the middle of the building with iron posts for support so we boys started to make a basketball court between those posts. We stretched chicken wire from post to post and across the back end to form the court. Many bumps and bruises and cut hands on the chicken wire were a common occurrence and the game had to be held up until the injured player was patched up and ready to play as most teams at that time only had five players. The score of the games at that time never run much over twenty points as there were very few places where the games could be played. As I said before, everything we did was done the hard way. As I remember, we won four games on our own floor and lost about the same number, but when we played away from home on better floors, we did much better. The basketball players names: Arthur Spillman, Pearl Nichols, Allen Grant, Earl Breckenridge, Grover Davis. Only two left living; Pearl nichols who lives at Athens, Ohio, and myself Grover Davis who with wife live at The Ohio Masonic Home at Springfield, Ohio. During this time we were getting these other things going. We were trying to organize a band and doing that the hard way also. The school had no money to help us, so it was up to the boys and their parents to get the band started, we had no instruments and no one to take charge, so a committee was appointed to go up to the Columbus Barrack and talk to the Commander that had the Barricks Band under his command to see if he would send a man out to get us started. We finally convinced him that this would be a good thing for the whole community and also give the Barracks Band a lot of publicity. The Commander finally said he would send a good man to help us get going. This man's name was Sargeant Dumas and he soon proved to be the right man. Mr Dumas met with the boys and decided which instrument each boy was best suited for him. Mr. Dumas was a fine musician and a very good teacher. The school had no money to help us get our instruments so each boy had to buy his own instrument and with what each boy made working and the help of our parents, we finally got our instruments. Mr. Dumas taught us how to read notes and how to press the right key for each note and trombones players the way to play by watching their slides according to the notes. Plenty of practice for all of us was the only way we could learn to play. Mr. Dumas left us about six months before school term was over and the Commander sent another Sargeant out. His name was Sargeant ~~Baynes~~ <sup>BURNS</sup>. He was also a fine musician and a very good teacher. He was with the band until the band broke up. We finally got uniforms about a year and a half after we were all out of school, but we played for many things that were going on at that time and gave a concert over in the grove at Beulah Park Grove about every Sunday until so many dropped out we had to disband.

BURNS

During all that time we were playing for some organization or giving concerts on the streets or over at Beulah Park Grove on Sundays Grove City High School and was the only organization that ever honored any of our endeavors, all of which was started the hard way. The band gave a Sunday afternoon concert in honor of the first Grove City High band on the football field in front of the bleachers. There were only three living at that time and one could not make it so that left Frank Weygandt and Grover Davis to represent the first high school band. We were placed in two chairs set out in front of the bleachers and were introduced to the crowd as two of the three men who were still living that helped build and play in the first Grove City High School Band. We received a fine welcome from the crowd and felt very proud for such a fine honor and from one of the finest bands in the State of Ohio.

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P. S. Dr. Stahl, I am 87 years old - wrote this twice but it didn't seem to help much. Please excuse all mistakes. I have arthritis in my hand. If you don't do anything with this, please send it back to me. Thank you.

I tried to get someone here to type it for me or just write it for me. They have an organization here known as the volunteers, but could find no one to help me out. So, I did the best I could do myself and that is all I could do.

The Home is beautiful, it is built on a hill and has beautiful scenery all around it. If you ever get over this way stop and see us. We are separated now as my wife's health failed her so much she couldn't take care of herself. We are in the Scottish Rite building 5 C rooms 426 and 527 - 5th floor.