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BPS101 TimeCapsule adds historical perspective

Early Girl's Basketball photograph from Batavia High School

A new feature on the Batavia Public Schools Web site features vintage photographs, documents, and other items from the archives of Batavia Public Schools. Started in the fall, the BPS101 TimeCapsule showcases a variety of items of interest to community members and alumni, as well as current students and faculty. The BPS101 TimeCapsule is available online at bps101.net/community/history.

BPS101 administrator Doug Drexler began the TimeCapsule project after coming across some old photographs in the high school vault as summer construction was underway. "It was amazing to rediscover so many pieces of our history, and I thought that the community would benefit from having access to them," stated Drexler. "Batavia has such a proud history as a community, and it is important that we maintain an appreciation for our heritage." Additional TimeCapsule materials have been gathered from the Batavia Historical Society and the Batavia Public Library, as well as from community members.

Advanced Graphics students at BHS have worked to restore many of the photographs to near pristine condition, many of which were not in a displayable condition. "These have been great projects for students to work on," stated Jim Schmitz, graphic arts teacher at BHS, "Not only do students gain technical skills in working with these artifacts, they also get a good sense of the history of this community and of this school system."

Drexler agrees, stating that "the students have taken a lot of pride in helping to piece our community and school history together—literally," referring to a badly damaged photograph of a girls basketball team from 1907. Looking at the newly digitally-restored photo, one cannot tell that the photo had been in multiple torn and tattered pieces until students worked on it.

"The BPS101 TimeCapsule is a great community

Handwritten photo caption reads "Championship Basketball Team of Batavia, May 27, 1907." Photograph was taken by Swan Studios in Batavia. The "W.B." written on the basketball likely stands for West Batavia. West Batavia High School and East Batavia High School did not officially combine until 1911.

It is not currently known what championship this photo refers to. The names of the players are also not known.

Batavia boys and girls were competing in high school basketball very early in the 1900s. Unfortunately, the Illinois High School Athletic Association banned interscholastic competitive sports for girls in 1908 (just a year after this photograph was taken); girl's basketball was not officially reinstated by the IHSA until 1973.

resource for honoring our past and the milestones of our school district," stated Jack Barshinger, Superintendent of Batavia Public Schools. "With the upcoming 100-year anniversary of the school district in 2011, I see the TimeCapsule playing a prominent role in revisiting our history."

Since the BPS101 TimeCapsule began, several community members have contacted the school district to provide additional materials to post in the future—everything from photos from athletic game, music concerts, and building construction to documents about student dress codes from the early 20th Century. "This has been a very rewarding project, and we've only scratched the surface of what we can do with it," said Drexler. He envisions the BPS101 TimeCapsule being used by K-12 students as a classroom resource in addition to being accessible to the community. "There is so much material out there about our past, and it would be a shame to let it just sit there collecting dust."

If you are aware of photographs, film, documents, or other items that would be interesting to feature in the BPS101 TimeCapsule, or have additional information to share about any of the items currently on display, please contact Doug Drexler at doug.drexler@bps101.net.