

## Belle Haven School

Source: Yesterday's Schools by Lucy Phinney Walsh

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“In August 1876, another mystery comes to light. On that date, the Brentsville Board opened a school in a house belonging to F. W. Holmes. They paid \$4.50 a month for the use of the room and appropriated \$2 for a cord of wood to heat the building. Miss Fannie E. Taylor was appointed as the teacher. The Board minutes go on to locate the school as being across from Belle Haven. That is the location of the Holmes School but a school by that name is only mentioned during the 1876 school term. Then it comes up again in the Dumfries District where it remained opened using the name of the Belle Haven School until 1927. Are these the same schools? Did the District boundaries change or become better defined? The Holmes area was quite a distance from the present limits of the Brentsville District.

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“ This one-room schoolhouse was located just inside the present eastern boundary of the Quantico Marine Base on the old Elk Run Road about a quarter mile west of Joplin (then Forest) road. It was near the Holmes Store and the Holmes house, adjacent to the Belle Haven Baptist Church, in the old village of Voy, or Kopp as it was once known. Because it was common practice in those days to name the local school for its location in the community, it was called the Holmes School.

The school served the white children of the area and the names of Holmes, Lynn and Woolfenden were found on the school records year after year. At some point, a new schoolhouse was built across the road and renamed the Belle Haven School. It was not, however, affiliated with the nearby Belle Haven Church.

Low enrollment and the push towards consolidation of the small schools led to the closing of the Belle Haven School at the end of the 1926-27 school year. The children in the lower grades were transported to the Joplin School, the upper grades were transported to the Dumfries School.

An offer to buy the school for \$100 was received by the School Board as early as 1931 but the Board was not ready to sell. In 1933, the School Board received another offer of \$100 to buy the School but again rejected it because it was felt that the value was at least \$300. If no one offered that amount, the Board would use the materials from the school to build the three teachers school at Woodbine. Since no further records of offers either tendered or accepted have been found, apparently the Board did just that. In any case, the building was torn down because in July of 1933 permission was given to the Board of Deacons of the Belle Haven Baptist Church to use “the abandoned school lot” for parking as long as the church agreed to “protect the property at all times.”

The foundation of the schoolhouse can still be clearly seen in the woods across from the Belle Haven Cemetery beside which the church used to stand.