

**ETTA
DOROTHEA
DALE**
1872-1943



**SCHOOL
NAMED FOR
EL RENO
EDUCATOR**

Etta Dale was a long-time educator in El Reno public schools. She started when school furniture and supplies were non-existent. During World War II, when teachers were in short supply, Dale came out of retirement to return to teaching.

Etta Dorothea Dale was born in April 1872 in Stockton, Missouri to John and Syrena Dale. Her parents and her eleven siblings made the Land Run of 1889 and settled six miles southeast of El Reno. She received a bachelor's degree at Central State College (now UCO) in Edmond and master's degree in education in 1940 from the University of Oklahoma.

Beginning in 1890, Dale taught in the Banner school district, a six-square-mile area between Yukon and El Reno. In 1891, the people of Banner cut cottonwood logs, hauled the logs to a sawmill, had them made into rough boards and built a small rural schoolhouse. Everyone donated their labor.

Dale, the first teacher of this school, remembered the building as a "little frame shack" which cost a total of fifty dollars, not counting the donated labor. Since there were no blackboards or furniture of any kind, the teacher and pupils brought chairs and boxes from home from which they made their own desks. Dale used a piece of black cloth for a blackboard.

In those days, teachers had to get a temporary certificate for teaching, which required attending a normal school for two weeks. It was basically a review of eighth grade studies. Dale soon had 52 students, ranging from beginners to sophomores in high school. Pupils walked up to 2½ miles to school, and thought nothing of it.

The financial condition of the school district was abominable. "My salary was \$35 per month, and I was paid in warrants which had to be discounted 15%". She taught in this school until December 1892, when she moved to El Reno to teach fourth grade, at an increased salary of \$40 a month.

At El Reno, Dale taught in one of the frame school buildings which were erected at that time. She was made principal of the Central School in 1896 and was the only principal the school ever had up to the time she retired in 1937. They heated the building with coal stoves, but often had to burn green wood instead of coal.

The school was the social center of the community. Dale, who played the organ and piano, hauled her organ to the school every Sunday so they could use it for Sunday school and church. She organized a literary society in which the entire community was interested. She was applauded for all her achievements. Her capacity of love and understanding sustained all who lived within her sphere of influence.

Dale was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in 1935. Among her many honors, she received a Distinguished Service Medal from President Calvin Coolidge in a ceremony at the White House. It said "she was Oklahoma's woman teacher who accomplished the greatest good for the children of Oklahoma." After her retirement, the Etta Dale Junior High School was dedicated in her honor on October 4, 1937.

When World War II resulted in a scarcity of teachers, Dale felt it was her duty to return to the work she loved. She supervised all the El Reno schools and taught at the Etta Dale Junior High. When Dale died in November 1943 at age 71, all public schools in El Reno flew their flags at half-staff, town businesses were closed, and the funeral was held in the auditorium of Etta Dale Junior High School.