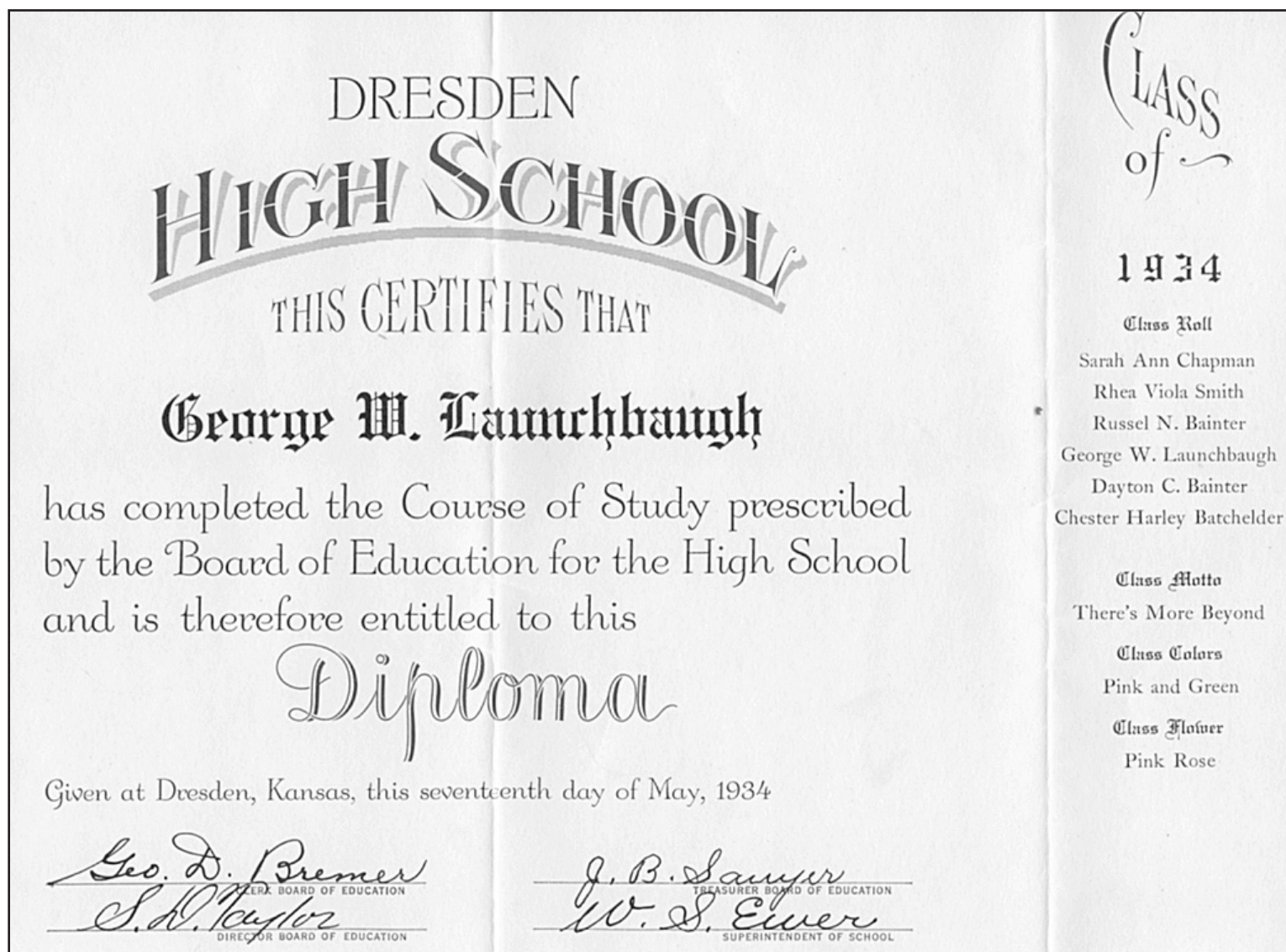


**Dresden High
Alma Mater**

*Dresden High, our Alma Mater
Pleasant memories never forgot
Heaven and earth
thy sons and daughters
Will thy blessings be
And ere the setting sun shall vanish
All the glory is thy lot
Love and Loyalty forever
is my pledge to thee.*



GEORGE LAUNCHBAUGH still has his coveted diploma, Dresden High School. He is the only living member of the class of six and will be 92 this month.

Graduates remember school

By **MARYLOU OLSON**

Though many may not remember when Dresden had a four-year high school — it closed in 1944 — three men and a woman who still live in that area recall many happy memories as students there.

The high school opened in 1924, closed with a graduating class of just three, as many of the last students went off to war, transferred to other schools or moved away.

The grade school in Dresden hung on until 1966, however. The brick building, declared a hazard after years of neglect, was burned down in 1991.

George Launchbaugh, Gayle Bainter, and Paul and Mildred (Karls) Welter are among a handful of Dresden High grads remaining in the area.

"I'm sure I'm the oldest alum living who graduated at Dresden High School," said Mr. Launchbaugh, a member of the 1934 graduating class. He will celebrate his 92nd birthday March 21.

He and Mr. Bainter, a 1938 graduate, have lived most of their lives in the McGraw neighborhood southeast of Dresden in Sheridan County and share many memories of school days, not only in Dresden, but at the old McGraw School.

Mr. Launchbaugh said that Bill Ewer was principal when he started high school. He said his father usually took the kids to Dresden in his Dodge touring car.

"Sometimes I walked the nine miles," he said. "My dad paid for our room and board and we were given 'two bits' (25 cents) every week.

"We started with 16 in our class, but with the Depression, some quit or moved away, so we were down to six when we graduated. Other classmates were Russel Bainter, Chester Harley Batchelder, Sarah Ann Chapman Potratz, Dayton Bainter and Rhea Smith Flaska.

"I was too little to play basketball, but enjoyed lots of baseball and softball. We were the Dresden Tigers.

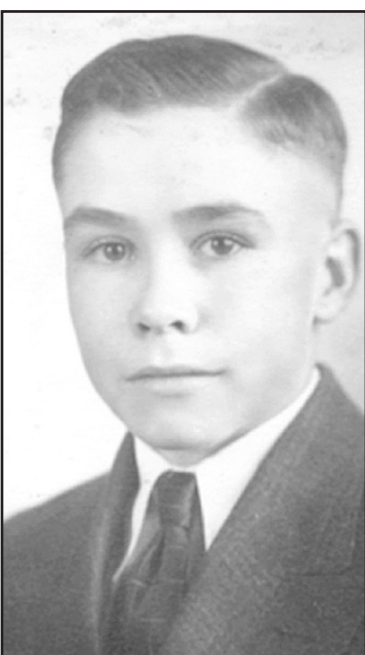
"We made our own fun in those days, and I'll never forget the day a couple of school friends and I decided to go fishing near Newell Johnson's place, about three miles north of town. The principal found us and made us walk ahead of him all the way back to town, striking us with a strap every time we tried to slow down."

After he graduated from high school, Mr. Launchbaugh said, his dad didn't need him on the farm, so he went to work in a shipyard in California. He joined the Navy on Nov. 11, 1942, and was assigned to welding, a talent he had learned at Dwight Bainter's shop in Dresden. His job was to repair submarines, but he was welding inside a large tube and was injured when he got stuck. He spent several months in a hospital after developing pneumonia.



THE DRESDEN HIGH SCHOOL was built in 1924 after the district voted to add a four-year high school to its curriculum. A two-year high school was offered from 1912 until the new school was completed.

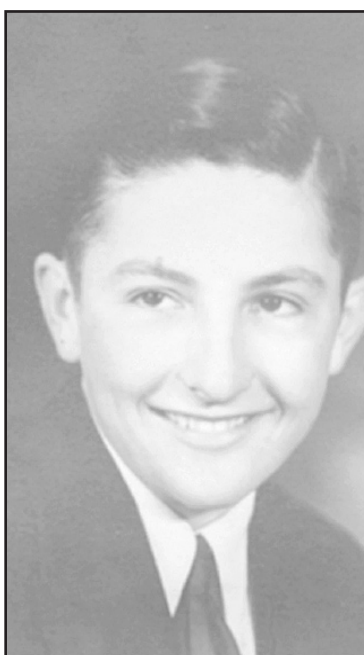
—Paul Welter photo



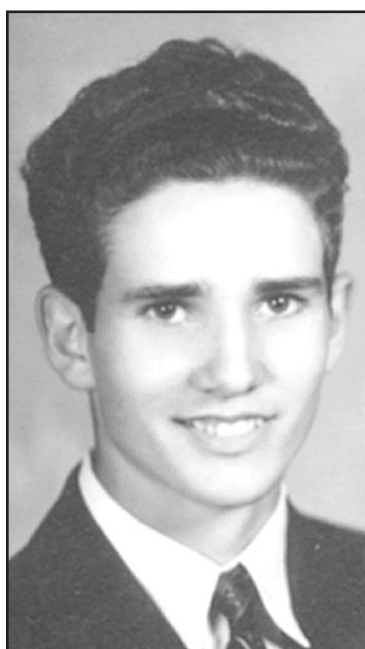
Gayle Bainter



Mildred (Karls) Welter



George Launchbaugh



Paul Welter

He received his discharge on Dec. 23, 1944, then returned to the farm. He married Carolyn Leist, a 1937 graduate of Decatur Community High School in Oberlin, and they still live on the farmstead where Mr. Launchbaugh was born.

Mr. Bainter said he and his sisters

roomed with relatives in town, a common practice in those days before all-weather roads and regular school bus runs. Their family farm was about 10 miles southeast of town.

"My sisters and I rented an apartment at the hotel owned by our uncle and aunt, Dwight and Mabel Bainter. We depended on my sister Irma to get us up in the morning, as she could always hear the train whistle when it came through at 5 a.m. However, one time she woke us up, we had breakfast and were ready for school when we realized it was still dark and no one was stirring in the hotel.

"Since we couldn't afford a clock, I walked downtown to check the time and discovered it was 2 a.m. We later found out that the whistle she heard came from a troop train that had passed through."

Mr. Bainter said his classmates were Vincent Welter, Helen Rhodes Randolph, Carolyn Dempewolf Peterson and Victor Dempewolf.

After Mr. Bainter graduated, he said, he enrolled at Chillotheo Business College in Missouri, but had to quit when he was drafted

into the Army. He served in Europe near Leitz, Germany, and in 2006, he returned to visit the area, as well as Dresden, Germany.

He was discharged in December 1945, then attended Washburn University, where he received a degree in serology accounting. After working 10 years in Topeka, he returned to the Bainter farm south of McGraw, where he and his wife, the former Ruth Carstens of Jennings, have lived since.

Mr. Welter said he graduated in 1942 and his wife Mildred was a 1941 graduate. He said that Irene (Sorrel) Fringer of Oberlin is his only classmate still living. Others were Darroll Vardimere and Max Jones.

"One day, Darroll brought a live bullsnake to school and hid it under his shirt," he recalled. "When a student spotted it coming out of his sleeve, she was so scared she jumped up and tore the desk right out of the floor."

Mr. Welter said he enlisted in the Navy in 1943 and spent more than two years on active duty in the Atlantic on the tanker, the USS Laramie. After his discharge, he served

as Dresden postmaster and later as rural mail carrier out of Dresden until he retired in 1980.

Mrs. Welter went to school all 12 years at Dresden, but her husband said he attended one year at Leoville. After graduating, she enrolled at Marymount College and then taught school at Fairview, a rural school east of Dresden, Rexford, Lund and Dresden.

She said she was teaching at Dresden when they were married on Feb. 16, 1944, and her bridal shower was at the Dresden School. Classmates were Louis Norris, Edna Dempewolf Hendrix, Eugene Dempewolf, Victor Goscha, Mildred Tice Dean, Ruth Kaspar Buchanan and Irene Babcock Stephenson.

SCHOOL HISTORY

The Dresden School District was formed March 11, 1889. A preliminary notice was posted March 15, and the first meeting was held April 20, when a permanent organization was perfected and district officers were elected. They included Tip Bacon, L.W. Brewer and Henry Roberts.

The school bore the name of the town, in an area settled mostly by Germans and named after the city in Germany. The first classes were held at homes of district parents.

A one-room school building was built in 1891, later replaced by a two-story frame building on Second Street between Kansas and Topeka avenues. The first school also served as a meeting house for parties, lodges and churches. Construction was planned by Jacob Bock, the first teacher.

The first school was heated by a stove in the center of the room and there were two rows of double seats down the center, with single seats along the wall. The district had 40 pupils.

The second school was replaced in 1912 with a two-story brick building at First Street and Decatur Avenue and a two-year high school was started.

In 1924, the board voted to add a four-year high school course. Bids were made and a new two-story school brick building was completed on North Kansas Avenue. There were 45 pupils enrolled in grade school and 37 in high school for the nine-month term, with six teachers.

The last class to graduate from Dresden High was in 1944, with just three students, Bill Kaspar, Cecil Karls and Anna Welter Nickels. Grade school continued in Dresden until the spring of 1966, when the district was consolidated with Jennings.

The school building was used for years as a community center, but after it started to deteriorate, it became a hazard, so in 1991, it was burned with the Jennings department on hand to control the flames.