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Decades before the state rolled out its junior college system, Reno County established its own institution of higher learning.

Nickerson Normal College was established in 1898. The next year, a special act of the Legislature organized the Reno County High School in Nickerson as the college's preparatory department. The college's board of trustees renamed the institution Nickerson College in 1903.

Originally, the campus consisted of three buildings. A brick and stone-trimmed building served as the center of campus and contained an assembly hall, cloakroom, large recitation rooms and a music studio. A brick and cement library built in 1906 added a study room, a Latin room, history room and 3,500 book volumes.

The college expanded in 1910 to add another building that housed a domestic science and art department, complete with a laboratory, kitchen, dining room, sewing room and a reception room. The college's domestic science exhibit earned a blue

RENO COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL  
NICKERSON, KANSAS

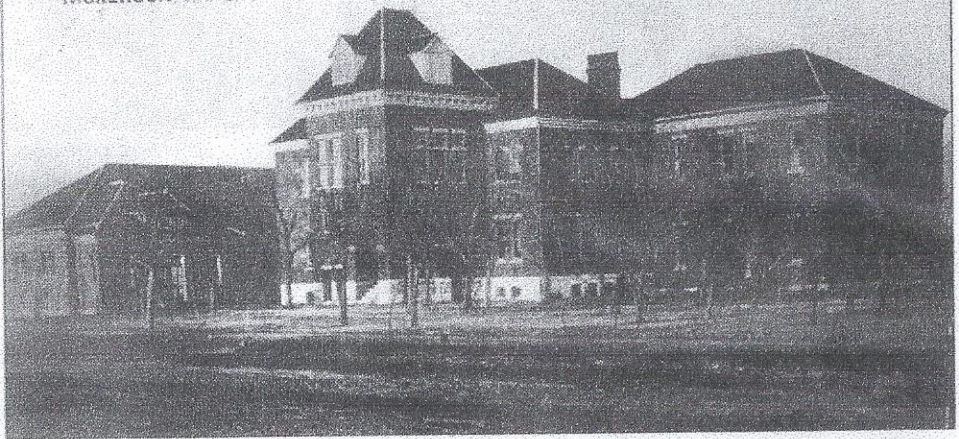


Photo courtesy of R-B Drive-In

A photograph of Reno County High School can be seen along with other historic photos along the walls at the R-B Drive-In, 201 E. Ave. A.

ribbon at the state fair that year.

The new building also housed a commercial department to teach penmanship, shorthand and typewriting. A college yearbook said the commercial department was "equipped with special furniture of the latest design," including typewriters, mimeographs, carbon paper duplication and filing systems.

Though it didn't last, Nickerson College did experience some shifting of the social

order. It was one of the few colleges in the state to field a women's basketball team.

Unlike the men's team, females donned long dresses with sleeves, flat-bottomed, low-top shoes and knee-high socks.

The college yearbook, "Blue and Gold," documented the first women's game, played in 1908 against Larned. The yearbook describes the game as a long shot for Nickerson's Tigers. Larned had an established women's team and was the

easy favorite.

"But Reno never quails before a foe," the yearbook states, "and before the final whistle blew that night, teams, management and the great crowd of onlookers were convinced that the length of a girl's skirt and the style of her hair dress really have nothing at all to do with the playing of the game. Girls' basketball had come to stay."

Astonishingly, Nickerson came out on top, beating the Larned team 20-13.

N. R. H. S.  
Class of  
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Art & Design  
Competition  
NICKERSON