

# History of

## Sugar Hill Elementary School

Sugar Hill Elementary School, located at 939 Level Creek Road in Sugar Hill, is rich in history. The school was named for the community of Sugar Hill.

The Sugar Hill School dates back to the fall of 1915. The first term began in a two-room wood building which stood in the corner of the Sugar Hill Baptist Church Cemetery. Mr. Fred Driskel, the first principal, lived in Forsyth County and sometimes rode his horse to school and sometimes came in his buggy. The school owned one acre of ground with title to the property being assigned to the trustees.

The school's water supply came from a neighbor's well. The value of the building was \$350. The building was poorly lighted, poorly ventilated, unpainted inside and needed painting outside. The building was equipped with double patent desks. The staff consisted of two people-- the principal and one teacher. There were 68 students enrolled with 41 in daily attendance. There were 45-minute recitation periods, and the term was 28 weeks in length. The school was maintained by \$1,100 per year from state, county, and local district tax.

The school grew from a two-room, two-teacher school

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 939 Level Creek Road  
Sugar Hill, Georgia 30518

The following have been principals of Sugar Hill Elementary School:

1960–65	Henry H. Boddie
1965–75	Gerald McQuaig
1975–79	Elsie Roberts
1979–97	Scott Pryor
1998–2010	Sandra Levent
2010–2016	Chris Godfrey
2016–Present	Dr. Taffeta Connery

**School Colors:** Orange, White, and Black

**School Mascot:** Longhorns

Original Historian: Tony Harrison

with an enrollment of only 68 students to a four-room junior high school in a few years. Principals of the school in order were: Fred Driskel, Roy Devore, Smith Tucker, Otis McNeal, and T. Carl Buice (elementary and high



school combination). The High School part was accredited by the state department during the administration of Mr. Buice who served 18 years as principal of the Elementary and High School. The school grew rapidly during Mr. Buice's principalship. Small schools were consolidated to provide an enrollment of about 500 students which provided for 16 teachers and a nine-month term.

When Sugar Hill became a Senior High and Elementary combination, it consisted of five buildings on the school campus. They were the Elementary School, the High School, the Gymnasium, the Farm Shop, and a Cannery. A large portion of these buildings was financed by local community bonds. Three local bonds received strong support. In fact, a bond issue was never turned down by the voting parents.

Mr. Sidney Buice drove the first school bus for Sugar Hill in the 1930s. He owned his own bus, and the school paid him ten cents per student to take them to school.

Mr. Cecil Gober, a graduate of Sugar Hill High School, served on the Gwinnett County Board of Education. To date, Mrs. Louise Radloff is the only School Board member who served longer than Mr. Gober's term.

When North Gwinnett High School was built in 1958, students of the Sugar Hill High School were transferred there. Sugar Hill was now an elementary school with a new modern plant, a kindergarten and five grades. The school's mascot was the eagle and the colors were set as red and black to match the high school's colors. During the 1988–89 school year, Sugar Hill Elementary School served 750 students in 34 classrooms.

The community celebrated Sugar Hill Elementary's 80th birthday in May 1995. During most of these 80 years, Sugar Hill Elementary served a rural community working with several generations of families.

In 1995, a new facility was built for the overcrowded Sugar Hill Elementary. The new facility was located at 939 Level Creek Road, less than a mile away from the original Sugar Hill facility. Sugar Hill Elementary was the name of the new facility and the older facility was transformed into the T. Carl Buice School, providing

service to special needs preschool students. In April of 2015, the Gwinnett County Board of Education sold this older facility to the City of Sugar Hill.



*Photo of the old Sugar Hill School*

Longtime principal, Scott Pryor, retired in 1997 after serving 18 years of service. Ms. Sandra Levent became principal of Sugar Hill Elementary for the 1997–1998 school year. She served as principal until her retirement in 2010. That year, not only did Sugar Hill Elementary get a new principal, Mrs. Chris Godfrey, but it also joined a new

cluster. With the opening of Lanier High School in 2010, the Lanier Cluster was born. At that time, Sugar Hill Elementary officially changed its mascot to the Lanier Longhorn and its colors to orange, black, and white, matching the other schools in the cluster. Sugar Hill and the other cluster schools worked together successfully to create a new school community that focused on transforming teaching and learning through innovation.

In 2016, Dr. Taffeta Connery was tapped by the Board of Education to lead the school. This community's long history of supporting its schools and quality education continues today. Recent noteworthy accomplishments include:

- Sugar Hill Elementary School, along with the other Lanier Cluster schools, was the recipient of the District's Innovation and Transformation Award, earning \$150,000 in grant money to further innovative teaching and learning in the cluster.
- Its teachers participate in thousands of hours of professional development and provide training to other teachers in the district.
- As a result of an Eagle Scout project, students have opportunities for authentic learning in an outdoor classroom.
- The school provides enrichment and remediation opportunities before and after school.
- Sugar Hill benefits from an active PTA that supports school initiatives.

