

History of

Pharr Elementary School

Pharr Elementary opened its doors in August of 1990. The school was named after a beloved educator in the area, Lorena Nicholson Pharr. Mrs. Pharr was born on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1913, in Sumter County, Georgia. She grew up on a farm with two brothers and two sisters.

Her first nine years of school were spent at Thalean Junior High School. In the ninth grade she won the Sumter County Spelling Bee and journeyed to Atlanta to the Southeastern Fair for state competition. At that time school systems had a formal graduation from the ninth grade. Lorena was class Valedictorian.

Her tenth and eleventh grades were completed at Americus Normal College, where she studied under college teachers. She was president of her senior class and at graduation received the United Daughters of the Confederacy Medal for the highest grade in history.

Lorena continued at Americus Normal College for her freshman and sophomore years and graduated with a two-year teaching certificate at the age of eighteen. Americus Normal College later became Georgia Southwestern College.

FAST FACTS

Address: 1500 North Road
Snellville, GA 30078

The following have served as principals of Pharr Elementary School:

1990–2000	Gary Fairley
2000–2012	Jerry Raymond
2012–Dec. 2016	Mary M. Thomas
Jan. 2017–Present	Lisa Rhodes

School Colors: Green and Gold

School Mascot: Rams

It was not until 1936 that Lorena came to teach at Snellville High School where her brother held the positions of Assistant Principal and Agriculture teacher. Lorena's brother and W.C. Britt of Snellville spent time hunting together in Americus. Mr. Britt

Pharr Elementary School

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Dr. Allen C. Gray

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Architect

Georgia

Georgia Mountain Community, Inc.

1990



saw Lorena working with her young nephew, like what he saw, and offered her a position teaching first grade the next year. She then moved to second grade and remained there for two years.

Lorena met Yulee Pharr in Snellville and they were married on June 5, 1939. On July 11, 1942, they had a daughter, Nancy. Lorena and Yulee lived in Charleston, South Carolina during the war and moved back to Snellville in 1946.

Mr. Britt immediately recruited her to return to teaching and she was promoted to teaching third grade. She had a three-year life certificate when she returned to teaching but through correspondence courses, Saturday classes, and summer school Lorena completed her B.S. Degree in Education from the University of Georgia in 1952. Around the time that she was considering obtaining her master's degree her daughter, Nancy, was killed in an automobile accident. The sadness as a result of that loss delayed the master's decision and she eventually lost interest. In the ensuing years she completed many hours of inservice work and travel. Lorena was dedicated to teaching for 27 years before she retired in 1974.

She fondly came to be known as "Miss Lorena" because, when she returned to the classroom, her students were given the option of calling her "Mrs. Pharr" or "Miss Lorena". They chose the later and the name followed for her teaching career.

After retiring from teaching Miss Lorena spent many hours going back to Britt Elementary to read stories, working in her well known and beautiful flower gardens, doing needlework, visiting sick and shut-ins, working in her church, reading, traveling, and cooking. She also remained active in a retired teacher's group, Delta Kappa Gamma, Senior Citizen's Group, and playing in the Keenage Swinger's Band. Miss Lorena had very few dull moments!

Miss Lorena's favorite pastime was always reading. She told how she loved libraries as a child and read every book in them, some of the books were read twice. She had been heard to say that her greatest reward as a teacher was to encourage boys and girls to love reading and become lifelong readers.

While reading was a favorite, Miss Lorena was also a generous gardener and passalong plants from the many gardens in the yard of their home, which was located at the corner of Pharr and North Roads in Snellville, are in evidence throughout the area, including on the grounds of the school named in her honor in 1990, Pharr Elementary School.



Lorena Pharr

A mural in the atrium of the school depicts the family farm and shows Mr. & Mrs. Pharr and their daughter, Nancy. A gazebo and garden area behind the school's gymnasium are dedicated to Mrs. Pharr.

When Pharr Elementary opened in 1990 the original building had 43 classrooms. The school's construction cost was \$3,588,638. In 2000, a 10-room addition was finished at a cost of \$1.6 million, providing the school with additional teaching and learning space.

Over the years, Pharr Elementary students and staff have been recognized for a number of achievements. Of

particular interest are the school's efforts in the area of environmental education. Pharr Elementary has been recognized as a Reaching Higher Green & Healthy School in the Environmental Achievement Awards sponsored by Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful. The award recognizes the planning and implementation of environmental programs, practices, and education efforts in seven specific earth-friendly areas— waste reduction, education and stewardship, water conservation and watershed protection, air quality, energy conservation, beautification and green space preservation, and community outreach. Particularly noteworthy is the school's emphasis on recycling and environmental activism. In addition to earning recognition locally for their work in this area, the Pharr Elementary students and staff earned national recognition when their school was named a 2016 Green Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education.