

## Who Was J. Emmett Hinchcliffe, Sr.?



O'Fallon owes its long history of educational excellence in large part to Jay Emmett Hinchcliffe, Sr. He was born in Williamson County, Illinois, on October 29, 1892, and grew up in the Herrin area. He began his teaching career in Herrin before teaching in Mascoutah, Marissa, and Shiloh. He became superintendent of O'Fallon public schools in 1921.

At that time, one person was head of both the grade school district and the high school district. In addition, Mr. Hinchcliffe was principal of the high school and taught history there. He began the high school chorus and encouraged the high school's participation in local academic contests.

Under his leadership, two new buildings were built - a high school in 1925 (razed in 1992) and a gymnasium in 1938, which still stands today at Marie Schaefer School. He led the schools through the Great Depression and the early years of World War II. But on July 27, 1943, Mr. Hinchcliffe resigned from his 22-year position as superintendent of schools so he could "engage in work more vitally related to the war effort than teaching." He remained in O'Fallon, working at Independent Engineering as their personnel director, becoming the City Treasurer, and volunteering in many community efforts.

Mr. Hinchcliffe died on October 19, 1974, at the age of 81, just two years after the dedication of the new elementary school named in his honor.

(Information taken from a series of articles published in the *O'Fallon Progress*, Dec. 2002 through Jan. 2003. Used with permission.

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