

The First School (1869)

Before Poplar Bluff had paved streets or a railroad, it had a school.

In 1869, the Butler County Education Society established a two-story frame building at an unknown location in the young settlement — the first school in what would become the largest school system in southeast Missouri. It was called the Black River Seminary, under the direction of Professor H. McKennon.

Sixteen years later, the Poplar Bluff R-1 School District was formally established in 1885. The "R-1" designation comes from Missouri's post-reorganization numbering system — R for "reorganized," 1 for the first district in Butler County.

Sources

- NRHP nomination, Wheatley Public School:
<https://mostateparks.com/sites/g/files/zuston361/files/media/pdf/2025/02/wheatley-public-school.pdf>
- Historic and Architectural Resources of Poplar Bluff:
<https://poplarbluff.org/historicarchitecturalresources.pb.mo.pdf>
- Ramsay Place Names File, Butler County (State Historical Society of Missouri)

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