

SCHOOL HISTORY

First School Opened Here in Year 1831

Grass Lake News, April 28, 1927

Interesting Educational Review

By M. Olive Cadwell

The following interesting history of the Grass Lake schools was prepared by M. Olive Cadwell, secretary of the Board of Education. A copy of this history, together with other things of interest to future generation, was placed in the cornerstone.

The early official records of our school have been lost, but facts have been gathered from people who have lived many years in Grass Lake so that our record is fairly accurate and complete. Miss Nancy Ritchie, a sister of Mrs. Ralph Updike, taught the first school in Grass Lake, in a dwelling house near her sister's home about 1831. In 1834, a log school house was built in the west part of the village, afterwards this was replaced with a frame building.

It is recorded in the township records in 1840, that a resolution was passed, that \$150 be raised by tax for support of the common schools.

Grass Lake School District No. 9 is the union of two school districts, and the main part of our present building was built in 1864, and was called "The Grass Lake Union School". In 1867, the east wing was added. The building cost about \$10,000, and the high school students gave annual exhibitions, to apply the proceeds on the indebtedness, and the debt was paid in full in 1874.

The members of the first Board of Education were: Harvey E. Osborne, moderator; Zeva Patterson, director; George C. Lord, treasurer; L.A. Danforth, Sidney T. Smith and William Winegar, trustees.

The first corps of teachers were: Henry A. Latson, superintendent, and Miss S.C. Marvin, Miss S.M. Hildreth and Miss Amelia Dawes.

Supt. Latson contributed much toward establishing and organizing a high class school. The alumni association and friends have recently erected a monument at Mr. Latson's grave in Oakwood Cemetery, Grass Lake, as a memorial of the esteem in which he was held.

First Graduating Class -- Mary Brown, now Mrs. Emmet Bunker, and Ella Keeler, afterward Mrs. Frank Robinson, composed the first graduating class in 1867.

Of the 56 graduating classes, none is more outstanding than that of 1868. This class, of five young men, was the pride of Mr. Latson's heart, though he did not live to see them graduate. It is the only class in the history of the school without a feminine member. These young men entered the University of Michigan together, and graduated in 1872. Three, Emmet Bunker, Frank Robinson and Hiram Keeler became lawyers, the other two, Herbert Updike and James Christie were teachers, all successful men.

Ella Van Houten, now Mrs. Collins, and Miss Minnie Updike of the class of 1872; E. W. Hobart, 1873; Miss Elnora Clark, Ida Parker, now Mrs. E.W. Hobart, Mary Lord, now Mrs. Carleton, of the class of 1874; W.K. Crafts, 1877; Harriet Lord, now Mrs. Shaler, 1878, are esteemed citizens of Grass Lake.

Supt. Latson was succeeded by Thomas Potter, Samuel Kennedy, Robert Wright and Herbert Dennison. Eugene Miller has the distinction of serving the longest period of time, being superintendent nine years, from 1876 to 1885.

At this time there were four departments in the school, the Primary in the south room, on the first floor, and on the second floor, the Intermediate in the east room, the Grammar, in the south room, and the high school in the north room. The superintendent not only taught the high school, but also had supervision of all the departments. There was no kindergarten room, and the school course was 12 years, instead of 13, as at present.

The school year was divided into three terms, Fall, Winter and Spring, and at the close of each term, a rigid examination was given on each subject, and no pupil was excused. The passing mark was 75 and Mr. Miller required students to write at the end of their examination papers, a solemn declaration, that they had neither given nor received help during the examination.

The Latin course was four years, and foreign pupils taking Latin, were required to pay a higher tuition than those who did not take Latin. (Linda Note: "Foreign" here applies to students from outside the Grass Lake District No. 9.)

Around the school yard was a peculiarly constructed fence, with four sets of steps over it, one near each corner, and no pupil was allowed to go over those steps before the first bell rang at 8:15, sun time. At 8:45, the last bell rang. Each morning the big sliding doors, between the high school and Grammar rooms were opened, and the pupils of the four departments assembled in these two rooms for chapel exercises. The high school students took turns playing the organ, and the Primary children marched up the west stairs to music and stood around the walls of the high school, and the Intermediate children marched in and sat on the long recitation seats in the Grammar room and high school, and the four teachers sat on the platform. Two hymns were sung and the superintendent read a selection from the Bible then the children marched back to their rooms. Rhetorical exercises were held every third Friday afternoon in each department, and every pupil was required to speak a piece. If any failed to be prepared, he could recite his piece the next Monday morning at chapel. At four o'clock, school closed, and pupils were not allowed on the school grounds after four.

There was no library in the school and the only books, besides the text books, were the dictionary and the encyclopedia, and any outside reading during school hours was against the rules.

No music was taught in the school during the winter months. A lyceum was conducted with wonderfully inspiring debates, dialogs, music, recitations, essays and a live newspaper.

The only artificial light came from several kerosene lamps, suspended from the ceiling, in the high school room. These were never used in the day time, and no day was dark enough for any cessation of study.

Each room was heated with a stove in one corner. On cold days the students wore coats and overcoats, and on very cold days, school was dismissed. The girls sat on one side of the school rooms, and the boys on the other, and for whispering, would be assigned a front seat.

The next superintendent, W.H. Merritt, stayed only one year, and was succeeded by Charles O. Hoyt, who in the three years of his superintendency, probably introduced more changes than any other superintendent. Through his efforts a school library was opened, and books and magazines could be read in school. Entertainments were given, and the proceeds used for library books. He taught chemistry, geology, astronomy, German, book-keeping and the muscular movement system of penmanship, and he made

interesting whatever subject he taught. He met with classes evenings to read Shakespeare, or to have experiments in chemistry or philosophy, and he gave many a lecture, stressing the value of character and honor, and the importance of a college education. He did much to raise the standard of our school. For many years he has been a Professor in the State Normal at Ypsilanti.

Succeeding him were G.W. Fowler, W.H. Maybe, C.B. Chaffee and M.F. McConnell.

The class of 1896 has the distinction of having four superintendents, during the senior year. John P. Everett, superintendent from 1896 to 1899, now a professor in the Western State Normal at Kalamazoo, left an impression on the school with his fine methods of instruction and discipline.

Succeeding Mr. Everett were Sherman Lister, Thomas M. Sattler, Floyd Allen, T. Burrige, C.V. Brown, J.A. Muma and M.E. Mills.

Of the later superintendents, A.W. Dorr served the longest period, from 1912 to 1917. Following Mr. Dorr were H.B. Snook, J.P. Jones, A.W. Glas, C.W. Price, F.I. Huber and M.M. Van Every.

Nine of the 56 classes were composed wholly of girls. In the years 1875, 1879, 1883 and 1898 there were no graduates. Two classes had one member each, Emma Watson graduating alone in 1870, and Herma Malnight, now Mrs. W.K. Crafts, in 1884. Six classes have had five members each, and five classes have had seven members each. The largest class, 24 in number, graduated in 1922. The class of 1920 had 19 members, the class of 1924 had 18, and 17 graduated in each of the years 1888, 1917 and 1923.

Four hundred and seventy-seven have received diplomas from the high school. Of these, we know that 41 are deceased, and other have not been heard from, here, in many years.

The **first Alumni Reunion was held in 1889**, in the east room, on the second floor of the present school building, and all present sat at two long tables. Now the association has become so large, that there is no room in the village adequate for it. This reunion is held biennially.

Many citizens have served on the Board of Education, giving of their time, thought and energy, faithfully and well. Among those who have served on the Board several years are: George Lord, William H. Smith, Dr. M.H. Raymond, D.W. Clark, E.L. Cooper, John W. Knight, M.L. Raymond, L.A. Parsons, W.F. Shaler, Eugene Sanford, Dr. James McColgan, J. Fred Rohrer, F.G. Mellencamp, A.W. Davis, Dr. H.A. Orvis.

Much credit for the success of the school is due to the many efficient and worthy assistant and grade teachers, who have labored earnestly, and have had much to do in shaping the destiny of the young lives under their care and training.

Since the opening of the school in 1864, many changes and forward movements have been made in the curriculum and methods of teaching, and discipline, and much has been done for the best interest and comfort of the students. In 1883 or 1884 the stoves in the school building were replaced with a furnace, and in the spring of 1906, the building was wired for electric lights, and the first electric light bill, for the month of April, 1906, was 65 cents.

In October, 1915, a movement was begun to secure an athletic field, and on April 1, 1916, with money raised by public subscription, a tract of land between five and six acres, was purchased from Lemuel E. Dwelle, west of the village, near the lake, from which our

town was named. Good use has been made of this field for base ball, foot ball and other games and sports.

In the winter of 1916, the school was first permitted to use the town hall for basket ball. On April 2, 1925, the town hall burned, and since that time the basket ball teams have had no place in Grass Lake for their games, but they have won victory after victory in nearby towns.

The number of teachers has been increased from four to nine. As the building was not adequate for this number, on Oct. 28, 1921, a special election was held to vote on the question of buying the Episcopal Church property on Michigan Avenue, adjoining the school ground on the west. The vote was nearly unanimous in favor of purchasing this property, the purchase price being \$1,000. The building was reconstructed into a Primary School, and the room which has been used by the primary department was turned into a well equipped laboratory. At the annual school meeting, held July 14, 1924, it was voted to raise by direct tax, a sum not to exceed \$1,500, to build an addition to the primary school, for a kindergarten room. This addition was built in the fall of 1924. For several years a room was rented in the basement of the Baptist Church, for the third and fourth grades. June 16, 1925, this church burned, since which time our present school building has been over crowded, and it became necessary to take some steps to relieve this crowded condition. At the annual school meeting, July 13, 1925, Dr. Howard A. Orvis, treasurer of the Board of Education, presented to the electors present, the plan of building the first unit of a new school building, instead of wasting money on a one-room portable building. This plan met with the approval of the electors, and the Board of Education began to make a study of new school buildings in near-by towns and in cities in different parts of the state. They interviewed state officials, Boards of Education, Superintendents of schools, architects and contractors.

May 6, 1926, a special election was held at the school house for the purpose of voting on the proposition of school district No. 9, Grass Lake, borrowing the sum of \$72,000 and issuing bonds therefore, for the purpose of erecting and furnishing a new school building, in said district, said bonds to bear interest at a rate, not to exceed five per cent annum. 191 votes were cast. 159 for, and 31 opposed, and one ballot was spoiled. On June 15, 1926, at a special meeting at the school house, bids were taken on the school bonds. The Farmers State Bank of Grass Lake made the best bid, which was par value, interest 4 ½ per cent, premium \$198.72. This bid was accepted.

July 12, 1926, a contract was entered into with Lane, Davenport and Peterson, of Detroit, architects for the construction of the new building. July 29, 1926, bids were taken on the construction, heating, ventilating, plumbing and wiring. None of these bids were accepted. Bids were taken again Feb. 23, 1927, and the bid of A.J. DeKoning, Kalamazoo, as contractor, was accepted, and the bid of the Lige Heating and Ventilating Company, and the bid of the Lakin-Allen Electric Company were accepted. The building, of brick, will have four class rooms, each 22 by 30 feet, and gymnasium and auditorium combined, which will seat about 600 people, and a fair sized kitchen.

The teachers in our school at this time are: Marion M. VanEvery, Supt.; Miss Irene O. Little, prin.; Wendell T. Bather, mathematics, science, athletics; Mrs. Mary L. Herbst, Latin, History; Mrs. Dorothy Cole, music, art, kindergarten; Miss Bertha King, 7th and 8th grades; Mrs. Jennie M. Close, 5th and 6th grades; Miss Nina Hilton, 3rd and 4th grades; Mrs. Adelaide B. Craft, 1st and 2nd grades.

The Board of Education: President, Frank H. Shelly; secretary, M. Olive Cadwell; treasurer, Floyd G. Mellencamp; trustees, William A. Shelly, T. Burr Jones.

The cornerstone of this building, laid April 25, 1927, may be opened in fifty, seventy-five, one hundred or maybe two hundred years, in times and conditions, quite different from those existing now.

The Board of Education hopes and believes that this new building will fulfill its purpose satisfactorily, and through the future years extend good will and best wishes for the Grass Lake school.

New Grass Lake School Cornerstone Is Laid With Appropriate Ceremony

Grass Lake News, April 28, 1927

Pleasing Program Given by the Grade and H.S. Students—

With Prof. J.B. Edmondson, state inspector of schools, as the principal speaker, the cornerstone of Grass Lake's new grade school was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies Monday afternoon. An interesting program, in which children from the grades and high school took part preceded the laying of the cornerstone.

The service opened with an invocation by Rev. Edgar Englemann, pastor of the Federated Church. The other numbers on the program following:

Citizenship pageant, fourth grade children.

Poem, Ruth Shelly.

Athenean oath, fifth and sixth grade children.

Flag salute, school children.

Song "America", school children and the audience.

Our Future School, Ethel Shaw.

Reminiscences, Clyde Jones.

Introduction of speaker, M.M. VanEvery.

Address, Prof. J. B. Edmondson.

Song, "New Michigan Song", high school chorus.

Benediction, Rev. Elwyn C. Stringer, pastor of the Methodist Church.

Start Made Toward Equipping Gymnasium—

A start has already been made toward the equipment of the new high school gymnasium. The first apparatus to be acquired for the new gym is a handsome Continental Nurses' scale won by the Grass Lake school children for selling the highest per capita of Christmas seals last December in the county. The scale was brought out and set up by an expert from the County Nurse's office at Jackson. Some idea of the value of the trophy to the schools of Grass Lake may be gained when it is known that the scale is complete for school measuring and weighing requirements and is valued at \$35. It is particularly adapted to school health and gymnasium programs and will prove of much benefit to the physical education work planned by the school for next year.

