The History of the Janesville public schools. 1959

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[s.l.]: [s.n.], 1959

THE HISTORY of the JANESVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Compiled by

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at the

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1930 - 1957

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Janesville, Wisconsin

1959

HISTORY OF JANESVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sources:

Minutes of the Board of Education 1855-1958 (inc.).
First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Janesville. For the Year Ending July 18, 1857.

History of Rock County and Transactions of the Rock County Agricultural and Mechanics Institute. (1856)

History of Rock County Wisconsin. (1895). Vol. I. p. 257

History of Rock County Wisconsin. (1908). p. 538

Janesville Gazette.

Map of Rock County with insert of City of Janesville 1858. To be found in the office of the City Engineer.

SUPERINTENDENTS

1848	James Sutherland
1854 - 1856	O. M. Gorton
1856 (Apr. - Oct.)	Henry W. Collins
1856 (Oct.) - 1861 (June)	Levi Cass
1861 (July - 1861 (Dec. 20)	John G. McKindley
1861 (Dec.) - 1864 (May)	S. L. Lockwood
1864 - 1866	Charles A. Hutchins
1866 - 1870	O. R. Smith
1870 - 1875	Warren D. Palmer
1875 - 1885	Robert W. Burton
1886 - 1889	C. H. Keyes
1889 - 1890	I. N. Stewart
1890 - 1893	F. W. Cooley
1893 - 1901	D. D. Mayne
1901 - 1916	H. C. Buell
1916 - 1920	Henry Faust
1920 - 1927	Frank Holt
1927 - 1935	Lester R. Creutz
1935 - 1959	Vernon E. Klontz

Graduates - 1858 thru 1958

1858	2
1859	6
1860	7
1861	0
1862	3
1863	7
1864	9
1865	0
1866	3
1867	7
1868	0
1869	6
1870	0
1871	0
1872	4
1873	11
1874	0
1875	5
1876	10
1877	10
1878	9
1879	13
1880	13
1881	16
1882	23
1883	11
1884	14
1885	9
1886	16
1887	13
1888	15
1889	17
1890	9
1891	16
1892	21
1893	24
1894	25
1895	23
1896	57

1897			34
1898			44
1899			74
1900			56
1901			57
1902			56
1903			49
1904			38
1905			40
1906			51
1907			51
1908			64
1909			47
1910			45
1911			46
1912			45
1913			53
1914			55
1915			78
1916			64
1917			63
1918			77
1919			80
1920			67
1921	- January Class	32	
1921	- June Class	81	113
1922	- January Class	27	
1922	- June Class	98	125
1923	- January Class	33	
1923	- June Class	88	121
1924	- January Class	37	
1924	- June Class	92	129
1925	- January Class	38	
1925	- June Class	115	153
1926	- January Class	55	
1926	- June Class	102	157
1927	- January Class	63	
1927	- June Class	154	217

1928 - January Class	58		
1928 - June Class	118	. . .	176
1929 - January Class	41		
1929 - June Class	166	. . .	207
1930 - January Class	60		
1930 - June Class	136	. . .	196
1931 - January Class	72		
1931 - June Class	162	. . .	234
1932 - January Class	51		
1932 - June Class	150	. . .	201
1933 - January Class	80		
1933 - June Class	180	. . .	260
1934 - January Class	69		
1934 - June Class	193	. . .	262
1935			244
1936			252
1937			217
1938			267
1939			265
1940			310
1941			299
1942			293
1943			329
1944			237
1945			306
1946			296
1947			290
1948			334
1949			302
1950			314
1951			291
1952			306
1953			323
1954			318
1955			319
1956			340
1957			365
1958			365

Total - 11,501

"The early settlers of Janesville brought with them that strong love for schools and educational privileges which characterizes the American people. They had scarcely made their families comfortable in their log cabin, before they opened a school for their children."[1] In 1839 Hiram Brown taught a few children in a log cabin near the south end of Monterey Bridge.

The first public school was "opened in the woods near North Main Street three rods north on East Milwaukee Street."[2]

"Soon after the erection of the Academy[3] two brick school houses were built, one on each side of the river, and the village divided into two school districts. This division continued for several years, when both districts were subdivided and some seven districts were organized within the limits of the village, now the City of Janesville."[4] Each district had its own Board of Trustees and Superintendent. It is probable that the brick school house on the east side of the river was located on Division Street just south of Milwaukee Street. This school house and one on Eastern Avenue were built in 1844. The latter was always known as the "little red school house."[5]

During this period some of the friends of education endeavored to organize Union Schools. An editorial in the Gazette of May 10, 1849 states the situation.

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[1] History of Rock County and Transactions of the Rock County Agricultural Society and Mechanics Institute. (1856) p. 163.

[2] History of Rock County Wisconsin. (1895). Vol. I. p. 257-8. Article on Janesville by H. C. Buell.

[3] Opened October 1845.

[4] First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Janesville. For the Year Ending July 18, 1857. p. 1

[5] History of Rock County Wisconsin. (1908). p. 538. Article on Janesville by Charles L. Fifield.

"A very lively interest, we are glad to observe has lately sprung up in the village on the subject of Union Schools, which it is to be hoped will continue to increase until something effective be done to improve the present condition of Common Schools. Several meetings have been held on the West side of the river for the purpose of taking the matter into consideration, and there is a general concurrence of opinion in favor of a Union School System. It is generally conceded that our present system, if it may be called a system, is far enough from meeting the wants of our citizens that the practise of detaching schools from each other, and conducting them without concern or established plan, is but throwing away money denoted to their support. Like every other kind of business, a wide diversion of capital designed to carry it on, and its outlay without any well arranged order proves entirely ineffective in accomplishing the proposed object, while with a concentration of capital, and a concert of action, there can be no failure in reaching the desired end....What is now proposed to be done is to unite as large part of the village as practicable, all of it if possible, and either purchase the Academy Building or build a new sufficiently large building to accommodate all the scholars that may belong in such a union, employ an efficient board of teachers and establish a regular course of study for the elements up to all the higher branches of education."

Nothing lasting was accomplished and the system of district schools was retained until the City Charter was amended. Provision now was made for the consolidation of the entire system of public schools in the city, "and placed the whole under the direction and control of a Board of School Commissioners, one from each ward, annually appointed by the Common Council, and subject to their general supervision and control."[6] By September 1856 the consolidation of school districts into wards was completed.

The City Charter gave the school commissioners, with the consent of the Council, the power "to purchase grounds, to erect thereon schoolhouses, to keep them in repair, to furnish schools with necessary fixtures, furniture, and apparatus, to establish, support and maintain Public Schools

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[6] First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Janesville. p. 3-4.

in the City, of such grades as the wants of the people may demand, to fix the rates of compensation to be allowed to teachers, to prescribe the school books to be used in the different schools, to visit every public school in the City at least once in two months, and generally to have and possess all the rights, powers and authority necessary for the proper management of the schools in the City. A report is also required to be made to the Common Council stating the conditions of the several schools in the City, the average number of pupils in attendance, the names and rate of compensation of the several teachers, the cost of supporting said schools for the preceding six months, together with such other matters as the Common Council may require."[7]

The first Board of School Commissioners appointed by the Common Council under the amended charter were: Messrs. J. Sutherland, S. W. Smith, G. W. Lawrence, and A. Palmer. Early in the spring of 1856 Mr. Palmer resigned and H. W. Collins was appointed to fill the vacancy.

The attention of the Board was first directed at providing "a higher department of instruction" than had been furnished in the district schools. Primary and intermediate departments were provided in each ward. When properly qualified a pupil would be received into high school. The whole course of study from Primary School thru to graduation from high school consisted of at least eight consecutive years of study.

At the request of the Board of School Commissioners the City Council authorized the purchase of the Academy building in which to house the high school. This building located where the Armory now stands was opened as a public school in the autumn of 1855.[8]

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[7] Ibid. p. 4

[8] Ibid. p. 5

The Douglas School in the Fourth Ward

Built in 1856

"The school buildings owned by the City were found altogether inadequate to meet the wants of the pupils in attendance. Some of them were old and marred and going to decay, and some were badly constructed, unfortunately located, unventilated and altogether unfit for educational purposes."[9]

As a result of these conditions plans were adopted to purchase two sites on which to erect two new buildings. A building in the Second Ward was erected on Lot 16 of the Pease Addition (Caroline and Glen), and the Fourth Ward School was built on Lots 3 and 4 Block 20 of the Palmer and Sutherland Addition (Linn and Galena). The cost of the buildings and grounds was about $13,500 and was accepted by the Board of School Commissioners in October 1856. Each building was capable of seating 280 pupils in the primary and intermediate departments.

The Annual Report for July 1857 shows the following attendance in the various schools from September 1, 1856 to July 18, 1857:

First Ward	236	(Corner Ravine and Pearl)[10]
Second Ward	319	(Caroline and Glen)
Third Ward	141	(South Bluff off Oakland)
Fourth Ward	428	(Linn and Galena)
Includes school in Fifth Ward		
High School	194	
	1,402	

Some of these pupils, due to change of residence, may have been entered more than once upon the register.

The last census showed there were 2,560 children between the ages of four and twenty, but the actual number of seats available in all the schools "suitable to be used for school purposes was 920....And the inference alone deducible from these facts, is that if the facilities for an education were

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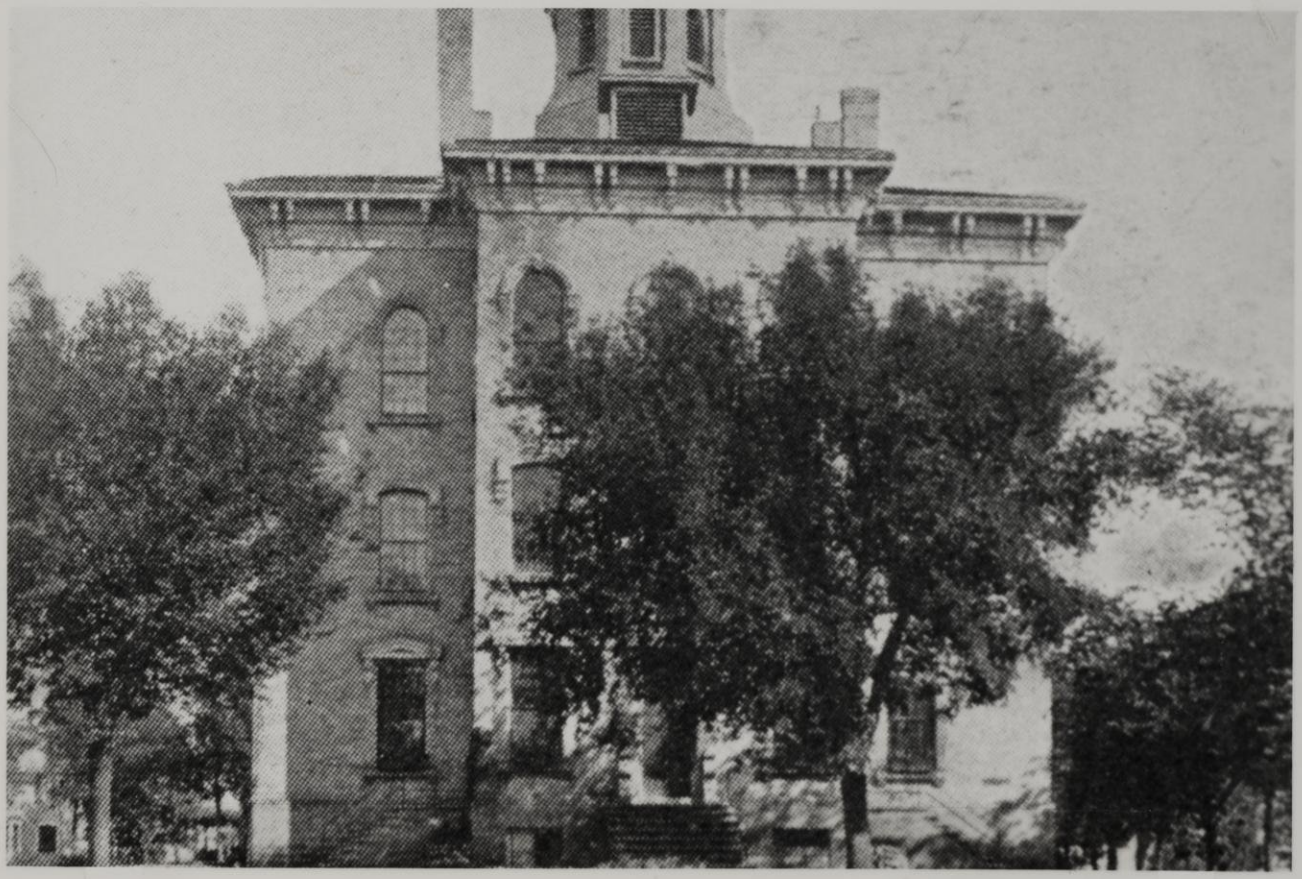
[9] Ibid. P. 7

[10] Locations based on Map of Janesville of 1858 to be found in the office of the City Engineer.



The High School

Built in 1856

Later called the Jefferson School

only increased, they would be fully employed by those anxious to avail themselves of our excellent Public School System." [11]

In October 1855 the Board of School Commissioners recommended the purchase of Block 13 from Rock County. The next year the Rock County Board decided to donate this land to the City for school purposes. In January 1857 the Common Council directed the School Commissioners to obtain and report on plans, specifications, and estimates for a new high school building, to be located on the newly acquired property (Second St., Third St., East St., and Wisconsin). The contract was let in March to Pratt and Brown for $29,750. The new brick building was to be 101 x 66 feet and three stories above the basement, surmounted by a cupola. The style of architecture was Italian, and when completed was considered "one of the most imposing and tasteful structures of the City."

The cost was to be financed by 8% bonds, one third to mature in nine years, one third in twelve years, and one third in fifteen years.

There was considerable opposition to the new high school building, later to be known as the Jefferson School. It appears that the Standard was the newspaper which reflected the attitude of the opponents. Their opposition was based chiefly on five points, viz: (1) it would result in increased taxation, (2) it would enhance the property values in the area of the school, (3) the location was not in the center of the City, (4) removal of the bodies from the cemetary was sacrilegious, and (5) the old Academy would serve satisfactorily if repaired.

The editorials and letters to the editor of the Gazette furnish the answers of the proponents of the new school. A few excerpts follow:

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[11] Annual Report 1858. p. 7.

"I have little patience with this croaking about taxation....Long before these (bonds) mature the City shall have doubled or quadrupled in population and wealth, very much of it to have come in consequence of these public schools; for every spacious well planned school building adds wealth, prosperity and attractions of our city an hundred fold."

It is ridiculous to consider it will enhance property values. "Who does not know that a school building and its grounds are a nuisance near one's door....It is plain to see where the shoe pinches. Some men seem solely and constantly under the influence of the almighty dollar, and anything that may in the least degree affect the price of city lots will sway their better judgment."

"It is accessible from all parts of the city, although to some the distance may seem to be great, but this is no objection when we take into consideration the fact that school children have too little exercise while attending school, which is much to their disadvantage physically and mentally....Wonder if school had been located a half mile west of the depot, whether the taxation would have been too great, or the benefit to adjoining property would have been thought of, or the distance from the geographical center of the city would have been urged."

In the issue of March 11, 1857 the Editor says it matters not to him what becomes of his mortal remains. "The thought that beneath and around the temple of science was once the depository of the mortal remains of man will serve but to incite the student to grasp with a sterner resolution the herculean task before him."

An opponent of using the old Academy building writes that the small, unventilated, cold, and cheerless stone building with its surroundings of noisy wood yards and especially its proximity to livery stables and cow yards "will not answer for the high classical and literary schools of Janesville."

One forward looking citizen commends the Commissioners on their educational policies but calls attention to the omissions in the plans for any provision for teaching music or for a gymnasium. "The sound mind and sound body are these not the essentials of a truly progressive community?"

From the minutes of the Board it is apparent that the new high school building did not proceed as rapidly as necessary to meet the crowded conditions in the schools. In May 1858 the Board appealed to the Common Council saying that "the welfare of the schools of the City imperatively demand that at least the first and second stories of said Building should be completed at the earliest practicable moment. Every school building owned by the City is filled to the extent of its capacity except the Second Ward, and applications are daily being made to the Board of Education by parents for seats in the school for their children, especially is this the case in the First and Fourth Wards. By completing the first and second stories of the high school building the school now held in the Old Academy Building would be removed to it, thus leaving the old Building entirely for the use of the Primary and Grammar scholars of the First Ward and a section of the Fourth Ward adjoining."

Again in March 1859 the Board urges the completion of at least two rooms by April 11th. Full use of the new building was apparently not possible until September 1859. Although it was built primarily for high school classes, primary and intermediate departments were housed here also.[12]

The Annual Report of 1857 states that among the objects of the high school was the preparation of "thoroughly qualified teachers for the Public Schools of the City and County." To carry out this object an experimental department was set up with a teacher under the supervision of the principal.

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[12] In 1907 an addition to South was constructed.

Here those desiring to become teachers were given the opportunity to observe and participate in actual classroom procedure. How long this situation existed is not noted in the minutes.

After reorganization of the schools it was necessary for the Board to adopt a number of policies to be used in all the schools. In 1857 the school year was reduced from 44 to 42 weeks and divided into three terms. The tuition rates were set at $3.00 per term for Ward Schools, $3.50 per term for the junior department of the high school, and $4.00 per term for the senior department.[13] A paid up certificate was necessary for admission. The school day ran from 9-12 A.M., and 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. except for the months of April, May, June and September when the afternoon hours were 1:30-4:30 P.M.

Unexcused absences from school, except for sickness, resulted in the pupil forfeiting his seat in school. He could be reinstated only by the Board of Education. In 1859 punishment was extended to permit the teacher to place the pupil in a lower class and to keep him there until he was prepared sufficiently to resume his place in the higher grade.

Any pupil who smoked or chewed tobacco in the school building was suspended. Parents and guardians were held responsible for any damage by pupils to school property.

In order for a "scholar" to enter the high school it was necessary to pass an examination prepared by the school superintendent. In 1859 Supt. Cass reported that no pupil had received the required 75% and therefore none could be admitted to high school. The Board then reduced the percentage required to 60%.

The teachers were hired by the quarter and during these early years

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[13] The cost per pupil in 1857 was $5.28.

there was a large turnover. The average monthly wage in 1856 for men was $70.00 and for women $25.00. On every alternate Saturday all teachers in the City were required to meet with the principal "for the purpose of mutual improvement in the science of teaching and consultation in reference to the interest of all schools in the City." On the remaining alternate Saturdays two hours "shall be devoted in each school to oral instruction, rhetorical exercises and composition."[14] Absences from teachers' meetings on Saturday resulted in the Board penalizing those teachers who failed to attend. In 1863 two-tenths of one week's wages was to be deducted from their salary if absent, "and such absences may in the discretion of the Board be considered sufficient cause for dismissal." In 1864 the penalty was increased to one half of a day's wages.

In the minutes of the Board of March 21, 1859 the following motion is recorded: "Moved that the President be authorized to dispose of the teachers now in the employ of the city as shall be thought best."

Destruction of school property became common during the 1860's. In 1865 the Clerk of the Board was ordered "to demand payment or restitution of damages of the two men whose sons broke into and did damage in the High School Building to wit- spoiled two clocks, two call bells, one Webster Quarto Dictionary, one Johnson's large atlas, inkstands etc." It was necessary to put a guard on duty at night at the Fourth Ward School.

It is interesting to note that the magazine now known as "The Wisconsin Journal of Education" was started in 1855 by 2 Janesville citizens, James Sutherland and G. S. Dodge. At the end of the first year of publication it was given by the publishers to the Wisconsin Teachers' Association.

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[14] August 22, 1856.

Two views of First Ward School - Built in 1870 - Later called Washington School

The Civil War naturally affected the public schools. Many boys apparently quit school to enter the army as there were no pupils graduated in 1861 or 1865. Principal Lockwood, accompanied by a group of high school boys, responded to the last call for volunteers. Five of the boys were members of the graduating class and were awarded their diplomas with the class of June 1864.

As the city population grew in the late 60's and 70's, and greater interest was taken in education the need for more schools became urgent. A letter in the Gazette of February 4, 1876 written by J. B. Whiting, Clerk of the Board, gives a picture of the conditions:

> "The City has now 1,352 sittings, not counting the sittings in the High School. It has enrolled as members for the current year 1,636, of which number 109 are members of the High School proper, leaving 1,527 to be accommodated by 1,362 seats..... It is true that the entire enrollment are never present at any given day. But it is true that the capacity has compelled the Board of Education to divide all the primary departments on the west side into sections, thus instructing one half of the school in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon."

Mr. Whitney goes on to say that parents were very dissatisfied with the existing setup, and felt that promotions had been necessary before the pupils were actually ready for advancement. A single department in the Fourth Ward showed 30 pupils in excess of the accommodations.

In 1870 a new building in the First Ward to accommodate 300 pupils was completed. This school was located on Washington Street between Mineral Point and Ravine streets and was built at a cost of $800.75. By 1888 it was necessary to build a two-story addition at a cost of $2,545. This addition was placed on the west side of the building and consisted of one room on each floor and a basement.

In an attempt to improve the overcrowding the city was redistricted in 1874 for school purposes into five districts. The old Fourth Ward School at Galena and Linn became the Fifth Ward School. This necessitated a new building in the Fourth Ward.

The Webster School - Built in 1874

In May 1874 the property of Milo Curtis located on High, Holmes, and School streets was acquired for $2,000, and a new Fourth Ward School was built at a cost of $6,600. This building was put into use in September 1874, and was later known as the Webster School.

In 1875 the Board after considering the advisability of repairing the old Academy Building decided to build a new shcool on the site. In 1876 a new building, to be known as the Central Building, was built at a cost of $9,800.

In 1888 a new building in the Second Ward was started as a result of the report of Architect George K. Calling that the existing building was a fire trap. A contract was let for $10,346 for the building and one for $1,535 for steam heating. The school grounds of necessity were enlarged by the purchase of 45 feet on Caroline Street and extending back 132 feet and adjoining the school lot on the south. The purchase price was $450. This school was later known as the Adams School.

The Board of Education accepted an invitation from the State Department of Education to send pictures of some of the Janesville schools to be shown at the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876. Pictures were taken and properly framed of the First, Fourth, and Central Buildings. Pictures of schools were also sent to the St. Louis Exposition of 1884.

Throughout the 60's, 70's, and 80's the Board was plagued with heating of the school buildings, especially the high school. As late as 1886 janitors were instructed to hang thermometers in all buildings within three feet of the floor, and teachers were to obtain half-hour readings of the temperature in rooms from November 1st to March 31st and report same to the Superintendent. Even where central heating was installed it was sometimes necessary to add stoves which frequently smoked.

In the summer of 1888 the Board requested the Water Works Company to

The Central School Building

Built in 1876

carry their pipes to the lot line of the schools. The Water Works Company offered to furnish water free to the schools if the Board would furnish and install the service pipes connecting the schools with the water mains. During the summer most schools received city water, a decided improvement.[15]

In 1891 telephones were first installed in the public schools. Apparently they were installed by the Wisconsin Telephone Company. They were notified to remove all telephones by April 1, 1899. At the same time the Rock County Telephone Company was instructed to install telephones in each of the buildings. The charge was to be $1.00 per month and 25 cents additional for use of an extension. By 1907 the Bell telephone was installed in the Board of Education room.

A policy adopted in 1889 (Aug. 9), and still followed was that of naming the schools after great Americans. The names adopted were:

First Ward	Washington School
Second Ward	Adams School
Third Ward	Jefferson School
Fourth Ward	Webster School
Fifth Ward	Douglas School
Central Building	Lincoln School

Up to the 1870's the Course of Study for the high school gave little or no opportunity for a pupil to choose the subjects he or she might wish to study. In 1870 the Board provided that Latin could be omitted providing the parent or guardian make such a request.

In 1872 the Board received a petition "praying" that a teacher of German be appointed. It was not until 1885 that a Committee was appointed to examine the matter of introducing German into the schools. The minutes do not state what action was taken. In 1889 Greek was added to the Course of Study.

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[15] October 1918 the Railroad Commission notified the Board of Public Works that under the Public Utility Law they were not permitted to give free water and must collect for all water used.

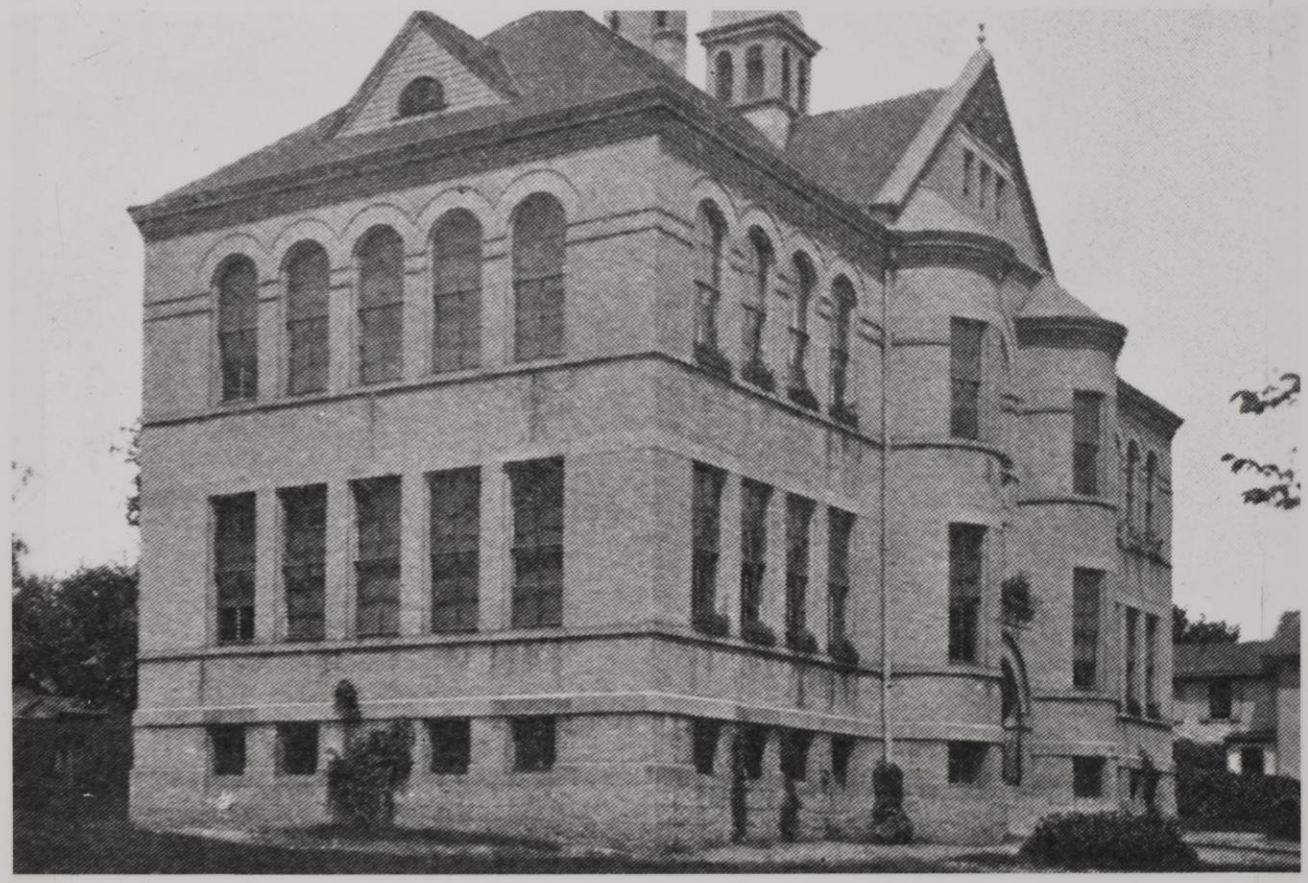
The Adams School - Built in 1888

The Fine Arts were not a required part of the curriculum until the 80's. In 1882 Supt. Burton authorized a system of drawing be put in all city schools, to be taught two days each week in place of writing. In 1884 the practice of renting a piano for the high school was adopted and continued until 1893 when the Board purchased one. There must have been disagreement over the teaching of music because in 1884 music readers were placed in the schools and in 1890 a resolution was adopted discontinuing music as a part of the course of study.

During the 1890's the greatest changes were made in the Course of Study in high school. In 1891 the Superintendent recommended the addition of a Commercial Course and the Board accepted the recommendation. In 1895 a State High School Inspector spoke to the Board relative to introducing a course in Manual Training. A two year course was set up by the Superintendent and in 1897 it was expanded to four years. In the same year a Domestic Arts Course of four years was adopted.

No mention is made in the minutes where graduation exercises were held previous to 1884. In that year they were held in the Congregational Church for a rental fee of $5.00. In 1887 they were held in the Meyers Opera House at a cost of $15.00. It was customary for each graduate to write and read his or her own essay at the graduation exercises. This meant there were from nine to fourteen essays read at each graduation exercise in the 80's. This was a tiring procedure so in 1890 the Board provided that only three essays were to be read viz: the valedictorian's, and those of two graduates which were to be chosen by ballot of all graduates in the presence of the superintendent. Essays were to be prepared by all the graduates and the titles to appear on the programs.

The Building Committee of the Board of Education reported in January 1891 that the public school buildings were insufficient to accommodate the



The Douglas School in the Fifth Ward

Built in 1891

children and that attendance was gradually increasing. In many cases children were compelled to pass the crowded school building of the ward in which they lived to attend school in a less crowded building in another ward. The Board felt there was a pressing need for a new school building in the vicinity of Pleasant Street and west of the railroad tracks. There were a large number of children in the lower grades averaging ten years of age who were compelled to cross railroad tracks at no less than six different crossings. There were 77 children north and west of the railroad tracks who were practically without school accommodations unless they crossed the railroad tracks.

The Douglas School in the Fifth Ward, the Board reported, was "a disgrace to the City of Janesville. The condition of its walls did not warrant trying to put the building in proper condition for school."

As a result of these conditions and the availability of four full lots on Pleasant Street at a cost of $1,300 the Board requested authority from the City Council to construct two new buildings. In April 1891 contracts were let for a four room school in the Fifth Ward at a cost of $8,890, and for a four room building in the First Ward at a cost of $9,040. The Fifth Ward School was to be started as soon as the old building was razed, and the First Ward School[16] as soon as deeds to the property were acquired. The buildings were not in use until October 1891.

Due to increased enrollment in high school and the need for more modern equipment a Committee was appointed in 1893 to select a site for a new high school. The site chosen was the properties of Martin Halverson and O. H. Fathers on High, Dodge, and Pleasant Street. The cost was $6,235, and the area bought was one and a half acres. The Board desired accommodations

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[16] To be known as the Grant School.

The Grant School - Built in 1891

for 400 pupils, but this was later reduced to 350.[17] The approximate cost of the new high school was $43,369 and it was dedicated December 6, 1895.

Overcrowding in the Adams School was also a problem in the 90's. As early as 1892 a Committee was appointed to consider purchasing lots for a school in the Second Ward. By 1897 another Committee was appointed to investigate a possible addition. This Committee recommended an addition containing two rooms to be built on the north side of the building. A contract was let in September for $2,168.

In 1902 the grounds of the Adams School were enlarged by the purchase of a part of Lot 17 on the north side of the building. During the summer another two room addition was built at a cost of $2,860.

By 1904 the Fourth Ward was in need of more school accommodations, and the Board recommended to the City Council the purchase of lots 166 and 167 in the Smith, Bailey, Atone Addition for $2,000. The contract was let for $9,670 and the building was to be completed by January 1, 1895. Due to necessary changes the building was not ready for occupancy until later. This building became known as the Garfield Building.[18]

In the meantime a Committee of the Board was appointed to consider the feasibility of building a school house in the Spring Brook, Armor Street, and Blind Institute area, or transporting the pupils to the schools they attended. According to one member of the Committee there were 78 pupils from Spring Brook and the south side of the river attending Douglas, Webster, Lincoln, and Jefferson Schools, and 34 of the 78 were first and second graders. The majority of the Committee, however, recommended that a room be procured in the area for the smaller children. Nothing apparently was done to meet this need.

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[17] Further specifications may be found in the June 20, 1894, Minutes.

[18] Became the Administration Building in 1959.

The High School Building on High Street

Built in 1895

In August 1898 the residents of Spring Brook petitioned the Board to build a school in their area, but it was not until 1900 that a Committee of the Board recommended the construction of such a school. The lot chosen was in the Congers Addition - Southeast corner of Eastern and Industrial Avenue - and was the gift of Ex-Mayor John Thoroughgood. The plans were submitted in July and a contract for $1,975 accepted for a school to be ready for use in September.

In May 1907 a petition was presented by about 200 residents asking the Board of Education to remodel the Jefferson school building "so as to make it sanitary and modern in construction." An architect was hired and presented plans for constructing a wing on the south, and remodeling the old part, and installing a new heating and ventilating plant. The contract was let to J. P. Cullen for $20,000.

In 1904 the Board of Education agreed to permit the County Normal School to use the third floor of the Jefferson School for a term of not more than three years.

In 1911 the Board of Education requested an appropriation of $1,000 to equip the third floor of the Jefferson Building for the use of the Rock C County Training School. The County Training School was to have free use of the third floor of the Jefferson Building, but all repairs and equipment were to remain the permanent property of the City of Janesville. The lighting, heating, janitor service, and water bills were to be paid by the County. The Board agreed that "The City of Janesville will offer practice teaching facilities to the Senior Class of the Training School for one-quarter during the year, but the rooms designated for that purpose will be determined by the city superintendent of schools." The Training School used the Jefferson Building until the School was discontinued in 1933.

In 1914 it was necessary to construct a two room addition to the Douglas Building at a cost of approximately $7,600.

As early as the spring of 1916 the Board of Education discussed the possibility of an addition to the high school on High Street. The overcrowding continued to get worse, and the Board of Health had warned that the ventilation system must be improved if the building was to be continued in use. In October 1917 a Committee was appointed to look for a site for a new high school. In Febraury 1919 the Board recommended to the City Council the purchase of Lots 2 to 14 inclusive of the Dickson and Bailey Addition on South Main Street. The final purchase price of the properties on the west side of Main Street between Racine and Third Streets was $56,461.96. In September 1919 a contract was made for the construction of the basement, but due to the market conditions of cement and steel it was not possible to continue construction until 1921. The cost of the building was $930,963 and it was formally dedicated March 27, 1923, but had been in use since February 1st.

During the 90's there was interest shown in establishing a kindergarten. However, it was not until 1902 that the Board seriously considered the matter. A Committee appointed to investigate (1) the necessity of having a kindergarten, and (2) the expense involved, reported favorably in March 1902. They recommended that kindergartens be established by September 1903 and staffed by teachers who had received special training for the work. There were kindergartens opened in Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Webster Buildings. Another was opened in a room near the Douglas School in 1913. In 1917 the number was reduced to three.

The position of Truant Officer was established in November 1903 with his duties to include checking all pupils reported absent, and enforcing the State attendance law.

In 1910 Physical Education for girls was provided. In the same year the Board adopted a Course of Study in Agriculture. The course was so popular

that in 1915 a request was made to employ a teacher of agriculture for the whole year instead of just for the school year.

One item of interest in this period is that John Arbuthnot was given permission in November 1913 "to erect a wireless outfit on the roof of the high school building at an expense not exceeding $15.00."

One of the effects of World War I is seen in the action of the Board in discontinuing the teaching of German. (Sept. 1918)

The Superintendent was authorized in January 1917 to put semi-annual promotions into effect. The first class was graduated in January 1921. This policy was continued until June 1934 when annual graduation became the policy.

In 1921 the attention of the Board was called to the need of having a special teacher put in charge of the opportunity room. In June Dr. Woods of Madison made a full report of her investigation of subnormal children in the Janesville schools. She recommended that the Board provide two classes if possible for these children. The Board accepted her recommendation and the policy of giving special instruction to this group of pupils has been followed.

As early as June 1923 an appeal was made to the Board of Education to give the churches the opportunity to instruct pupils of the Junior and Senior High School in religious matters. There is no evidence in the minutes of the Board that any action was taken. A petition signed by seventeen of the clergy in Janesville was presented May 11, 1942, asking that junior and senior high school pupils be released from school one hour each week for religious instruction in their respective churches. After conferences with the clergy and extended discussion by the Board of Education it was agreed in January 1943 to release high school pupils desiring religious education the last hour on Tuesdays, and all other pupils were to be dismissed. This practice was discontinued after June 1945.

Beginning in 1906 much more attention was given to fire prevention in the schools. The Fire Department kept much closer check on possible dangers. In July 1906 the electricity was shut off in the high school until the electrical wiring was made safe. In 1907 fire drills were inaugurated in all two story schools, and in 1916 fire escapes were approved for some buildings.

During 1928 the Board of Education studied the schools' needs carefully. They found that the city schools were so congested and overcrowded that there was an urgent need for additional school buildings. The population of Janesville had increased in the last ten years fifty per cent, but with the exception of the high school there had been no new school buildings constructed in approximately twenty-five years.

The Board agreed that there were certain long-time objectives to be kept in mind in planning a building program. It must look forward to the eventual displacement of some of the older buildings (Douglas and Webster), and it should plan additional room for expansion. Then, too, it should look forward to an early separation of the present six year program into two organizations - one for Junior High School and one for Senior High School.

In December 1928 the Board recommended the purchase of the following sites:

1. A site of nine acres on St. Mary's Avenue and east of North Garfield. ($12,500)
2. A site of 4.75 acres on the corner of South Third Street and Ringold. ($10,000)[19]
3. Two lots north and adjacent to the Grant School property. ($2,000)
4. The so-called Sykes Addition.[20]
5. The use of a site on Western Avenue already owned by the City.

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[19] Additional land was later purchased.

[20] Later sold by the City because it was not located in the area of growing school population.

By March 1929 the firm of Law, Law, and Potter presented plans for a twenty room building on Western Avenue, and a ten room building on Third Street and Ringold Street, and a four room addition to the Grant School Building. The contracts were awarded for approximately $321,000 and the buildings were accepted July 21, 1930.

These new buildings relieved the congestion in the schools and made possible the closing of the Douglas and Webster Schools in 1930, and the Jackson School in 1932.

In 1935 a petition was received from the residents of the Washington School district requesting a new building. The delegation pointed out that the rooms were poorly lighted, the corridors were too narrow for the use of 300 pupils, and there was lack of sufficient play space. In October 1937 a representation of the State Department of Public Instruction made a survey of the schools in the city. Their report showed that between 1930 and 1937 there had been a 23.1% increase in the elementary school enrollment, and that there were no rooms available for expansion. In the old buildings there was an average of 33 - 39 pupils per teacher, and in the Washington Building the ratio was 39 to one. The increase in the number enrolled in Junior and Senior High School had resulted in 1930 in putting the seventh graders back in the grade schools.

In 1938 the Board of Education began another building program which provided for:

1. A new Washington Building on the 11.5 acres in the 800-900 block on Pine Street. The school was to consist of 9 classrooms, in addition to a kindergarten, library, an activity room with stage, gymnasium, and playroom. This building was to be started as soon as possible and to cost approximately $163,200.

2. A new Adams School on St. Mary's Avenue to consist of 14 classrooms plus the same special rooms as the Washington. Approximate cost was $212,153.

3. An eight classroom addition to the Roosevelt School plus the special rooms provided in the other two new schools. The approximate cost was $129,219.

The federal government provided 45 percent of the cost. These buildings were ready for use in the fall of 1939, and made possible the closing of the Jefferson School.[21]

During the 40's the Board continued to study the overcrowding in the schools. They were faced with (1) an increased birthrate from 1946 to 1950, and (2) the relationship between state aids for education and building requirements. State elementary school aids were paid on the basis of average daily attendance. In order to meet the requirements in 1951-2 it was necessary to provide facilities so that all class sizes in the elementary schools fell within the 30-35 standard. In 1951 18 out of 35 rooms were overcrowded. It was estimated that due to the tremendous birthrate from 1946-1950 it would be necessary by 1956 to provide for 600 additional pupils in kindergarten through sixth grade. Twenty-four classrooms would be available when the seventh graders were transferred to junior high school, thus leaving 16 classrooms to be made available by 1952.

To meet the increasing enrollment the Board recommended to the City Council that a bond issue for $455,000 be negotiated in order to add nine classrooms at Washington, seven at Adams, and four at Roosevelt. These additions were completed in the spring of 1952. During the summer of 1951 many improvements were made at the Grant Building.

The elementary school building program solved only a part of the problem. The high school building was overcrowded with an enrollment of more than 1,700. In 1946 four possible solutions were discussed: (a) build a junior high school adjacent to the high school building on South Main Street, (b) buy additional land north of the high school property and build a junior high school at the far end of the campus and duplicate all facilities,

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[21] The Jefferson Building was used during World War II by the Federal Rationing Board, and it was razed in 1947.

(c) build two junior high schools, (d) use the present high school as a junior high school and build a new senior high school at the edge of the city.

On November 9, 1948 the Board had decided to (a) adopt the 6-3-3 plan with separate buildings for the junior and senior high schools, (b) to use the high school building on South Main Street as a junior high school and build a new senior high school on a site to be chosen by the Board of Education.

In choosing a site for the new senior high school certain criteria were used viz: physical characteristics, accessibility for pupils, area for health program, safety and sanitary factors, size, future growth of the city, and relationship to municipal planning. Six possible sites were considered. After studying these and consultation with the State Department of Public Instruction the number was reduced to three, viz: (a) Goose Island, (b) area north of Pleasant Street and west of Oakhill, (c) area east of Randall between Racine and Ruger centering at Third Street.

On December 7, 1948 the Board of Education accepted the recommendation of the Buildings and Grounds Committee to construct a new senior high school on the Randall Street site. On January 11, 1949 the City Council authorized the purchase of approximately 50 acres of land at a cost of $45,000.[22] A loan of $135,000 was secured from the federal government in February 1950 to draw up plans for the proposed new senior high school. This money was to be repaid when construction actually took place.

On June 8, 1951 a petition signed by approximately 300 citizens was presented to the Board of Education. The signers requested the Board to reconsider its plan to build one senior high school and consider the building of two junior high schools, one on each side of the river.

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[22] In April 1953 four additional lots were purchased by the City to be added to the senior high school site. Cost $4,500.

Planning was halted and the State Department of Public Instruction was called in to make a study of the needs of the Janesville schools. Their report was received in April 1952. They recommended that Janesville should have one senior high school and two or three junior high schools. The site selected by the Board was considered the best for the present and future needs of the Janesville public schools.

The Board agreed at the April meeting to purchase two sites of approximately 20 acres each, one at the corner of Pleasant Street and North Oakhill Avenue, known as the Carrie Jacobs site, and the other just off the 1500 block of Center Avenue and to the west and adjacent to Joliet Street. These two sites were for future use as grade schools or junior high schools. The Board also agreed to proceed with the construction of the senior high school on the site previously agreed on.

After the final decision was made by the Board to build one senior high school, the opposition grew. The opponents argued that (1) the present high school was not obsolete as a senior high school, (2) that there had been no opportunity for citizens to voice opposition, (3) one senior high school would result in increased taxes, (4) that two junior high schools would (a) cost less than one senior high school, (b) reduce the distance for pupils to travel to school, (c) tend to make property values more equal city-wide, (d) eliminate the necessity for the greater majority of junior high school pupils to pass through the downtown area.[23]

On October 19, 1953 the City Council adopted a resolution authorizing a bond issue for $3,750,000 for the construction of a new senior high school, and to submit this to a referendum on November 3, 1953.

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[23] Note the similarity to arguments used by those opposed to the construction of the first high school built in 1859.

On October 28th the League of Women Voters held an open forum on the question of the referendum. The Board of Education was represented by Mrs. Dorothy Gilbertsen and Harlan Zodtner. The opposition was represented by Martin E. Williams, Milton Junction, a Janesville attorney, and Dr. H. H. Green of Northwestern University, Gregg Division School of Business Education who maintained a residence in Janesville. About 400 citizens attended the meeting.

The bond issue was accepted on November 3rd by a margin of 849 votes. Only 55 percent of the registered voters participated. The City Council arranged for the selling of the bonds and the Board of Education proceeded with the building plans. J. P. Cullen & Son received the general contract on February 24, 1954.

The building was ready for use in September 1955 with the formal dedication taking place on November 20th at 2:30 P.M.

In September the seventh graders were transferred to the Junior High School building on South Main Street. It had been agreed as early as April 1955 that one teacher would be responsible for all instructional areas with the exception of music, art, and physical education.

The enrollment in the grades in September 1955 showed an increase of 380, or enough to fill 12 classrooms. The census figures showed that an increased number in the kindergarten could be expected for at least six years. It was estimated that the elementary enrollment would be 4,150 by 1960, and 5,150 by 1965. This showed that more classrooms must be provided. The Adams area and the River Valley areas were critical.

In June 1956 the Buildings and Grounds Committee was authorized to take the necessary steps to procure sites and architects for two new grade schools. The next month the Committee recommended the purchase of (1) 15 acres on the west side of South Oakhill in approximately the 1800 block at a cost of

$1,000 per acre; (2) a. 10 acres in the 1800 block of Mt. Zion Road, b. 9 acres and adjacent to the land on Mt. Zion Road. The total cost of these sites was $31,500.

In July 1957 the Board asked the City Council for an appropriation of $1,843,882 to construct two grade buildings. The Jefferson Building on Mt. Zion Road was to consist of 16 rooms, and the Lincoln Building on South Oakhill 21 rooms. Each school is provided with a library, activity room with stage, playroom and gymnasium and conference rooms. These buildings were ready for use in September 1958.

The Board of Education and the City Council have anticipated further expansion of educational facilities. As has been noted, in 1952 sites were purchased at Pleasant Street and Oakhill Avenue,[24] and in the 1500 block of Center Avenue. In 1957 a site of 23 acres was acquired at the intersection of Mineral Point and Crosby Avenues for $24,500. This leaves the east side of the City without a site for future needs.

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[24] Fifteen to sixteen acres was considered enough for an elementary school and the City sold a part of this site.