

A Chronology of Brainerd's Schools

by

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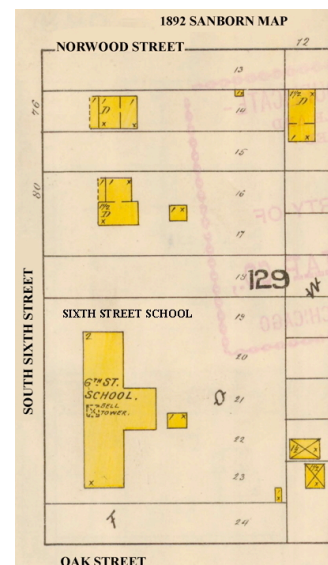
Early attempts at providing education in the city of Brainerd can only be characterized as those of great turbulence. Private schools came and went, parochial schools came and went along with teachers both private and public. Money was scarce, many citizens were vehemently against providing the funds for public schools and saw no need for any kind of formal education for their children. Student attendance in the public school, once one was provided, was sporadic to say the least. The information herein provided is based only upon what is currently available, hence there are a number of gaps to be filled at a later date.

1872

In February there was only one school in Brainerd and that was a private school taught by Miss Rorick in a rented building in “lower town.” “Lower town” may have been located on west Front Street near the Mississippi River. Since there was no public school in Brainerd a handful of citizens formed a private school in May, hiring Miss Julia Fitzgerald. Father Keller donated the use of the Catholic chapel for its use. The number of scholars was limited to thirty and the cost was \$2 per month in advance. The total attendance was 22 boys and 23 girls; the average attendance was 30. The alphabet, reading, penmanship, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, geography and history were the subjects taught. In August, Miss Nettie C. Ladd, a graduate of Ingham University, the first women’s college in New York and the first chartered women’s university in the United States, opened a school in the Baptist chapel. Miss Ladd taught drawing, painting and music, as well as all common branches. The school board of the Independent School District, held their first meeting at the *TRIBUNE* office on the 30th day of December 1872.

SIXTH STREET SCHOOL

This was the first school built with public funds and was located on lots near the southeast corner of South Sixth Street between Oak and Norwood; the lots were donated by the Lake Superior & Puget Sound Company, a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railroad. After the new high school was opened in 1885 this building was used on and off as a Catholic school; as the public school population grew over the years, it was used as a place to send the overflow.



1873

The Misses Ladd and Fitzgerald were offered a contract to teach in the public school for three months commencing January 6, 1873; the Baptist chapel was rented for \$15 a month and the board was authorized to offer a salary not to exceed \$55 per month. At a meeting held on April 8, 1873, the school district voted to erect a public school building costing no more than \$2,500. The school board was prepared to receive bids for the construction of a school building on April 19th. Plans and specifications for the two story, 26x44 foot building, containing two stairways, could be seen at Sleeper & Holland's law office. The school board finally made arrangements to commence two public schools on May 13th; one north of the railroad, one block west of the Congregational Church, conducted by Miss Nettie C. Ladd, and the other in the Catholic chapel on the west side of South 5th Street at Maple, conducted by Miss Julia Fitzgerald. The sealed bids for the new public school building were presented to the School Board on May 17 and the bid of \$2,134.00 by the Brainerd Lumber & Manufacturing Co., J. S. Campbell, Superintendent, was accepted. A school census was completed in September and showed a total of 275 children between the ages of 5 and 21, of which 143 were males, and 132 were females. A private school was opened on September 22 by Miss Nettie C. Ladd, in the new Public School building. She opened her school in the absence of the money to provide a salary for a public school teacher. Terms: Pupils studying arithmetic, geography, etc., \$4.00 per quarter; Primary Department, \$3.00. Miss Ladd occupied only the lower floor. The upper room was the larger and finer room of the two, and was designed for the higher grade of scholars. The building was completed in October and turned over to the school board by the contractor, J. S. Campbell. Morris C. Russell, editor of the *Brainerd Tribune* said it was "a substantial ornament to the town. We hope great care will be taken on the part of teachers in future charge of this fine structure, not to allow it to become defaced or marred in any way by scholars." On October 11 the semi-annual apportionment of the school fund, showed that Crow Wing County, having 322 scholars, was entitled to \$238.28, or 74 cents for each scholar. In November the school board decided to have three months of public school that winter in the new school building, commencing December 16th. There would be two departments—one down and the other upstairs. The teachers were Misses Addie F. Simons and Nettie C. Ladd.

NOTE: Addie F. Simons was the niece of Chauncey B. Sleeper; married Dr. Frank E. Bissell in 1875.

1874

The *Tribune*, in February, was outraged at the graffiti scrawled on the outside walls of the new school building and wrote the following editorial:

"Any citizen who may be skeptical as to the moral standing of the boys of this town are respectfully referred, for a slight proof of its truth, to the four outside walls of our splendid new school building, that was built at great expense for their free education, and which has only had school held therein but a few weeks. What kind of a monument of "nastiness" this originally fine structure will present by another six months, God only knows. Even at present, it is a moral poisoner to any child not iron clad. And if the owners of such boys will not inquire into the conduct of their offspring, and if found to be in any way concerned in such fiendish business will

not tan the hides off them till the villainous obscenity is forever broken up, why, the authorities ought to, that's all."

In May the school board decided there would be two public schools in the school building during September, October and November; then school would begin again during January, February, until about March 20th; then, again, from about April 15th to July 1st. The board determined it would employ one male and one female teacher and, thereafter, there would be three terms a year.

1875

G. B. Davis, principal of the Brainerd public school, at the last meeting of the school board tendered his resignation, anticipating the necessities of the board financially; the fact was that not enough money was available to pay his salary of \$75 per month.

1876

In April the *Tribune* was again outraged and issued the following editorial:

"The winter term of our public schools closed yesterday. The closing exercises in the afternoon were quite largely attended (for Brainerd) by parents and others interested in the schools, and reflected great credit upon the teachers Miss Ella H. Smith and Miss Fannie Robinson. The attendance of pupils was small compared with what it should be in this town, considering the number of boys to be seen every day lounging around our streets and growing up to a life of ignorance, slothfulness and nonentity, and whose parents or guardians evidently have never been able to realize the benefits of education and consequently do not appreciate it, but rest upon the doctrine "where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." Oh! for an EDUCATIONAL system and a law to ENFORCE it."

George Whyte, principal, and Miss Eva Wilcox, teacher in the primary department, closed their labors for the term ending July 21st. The public schools of Brainerd were again opened on September 11th, with Miss Eva Wilcox, as principal, and Miss Hannah McNaughton, teacher of the primary department.

1877

On January 22 a rumor regarding the safety of the school began circulating around town and Morris C. Russell, editor of the *Tribune*, wrote the following:

"A rumor gained currency in some manner entirely unexplained, on Monday last, that the second floor in the public school building in this town was unsafe and liable to come down with the weight of the pupils in the upper department. Dame Rumor was not, however, to be so lightly trifled with. She "enlarged the borders of her garments and made broad her phylacteries," and the report was scattered abroad, increasing with the rapidity of an exceedingly great fire, and came even unto the ears of every inhabitant of the town which is called Brainerd, which is by the great river Mississippi, even unto the chief priests and elders of the town, and they did hear it. Many became alarmed lest evil should befall their little ones, and they were taken from the school even to the half of the school, and of both thereof, inasmuch as that the elders caused a large number of mechanics, carpenters and builders to visit said building, and did examine into the cause of

this rumor, and the grounds thereof, and they gave forth unanimously that the building was perfectly safe; that men enough could not be gathered in the upper room thereof to cause disaster.

This, however, did not satisfy the panic-stricken, and the elders gathered together of one accord in one place, and caused the inhabitants of the town to meet at the school building to decide what should be done. The inhabitants having interest in this matter accordingly gathered themselves together with the chief priests and scribes, and did with one accord make demand that the building should be strengthened by pillars under the upper floor in the middle thereof, and declared that their children should not attend the school until this was done; whereupon the chief priests did decide, notwithstanding, in their opinion the building is perfectly safe without it, that oil should be poured upon the troubled waters, and a “compromise bill” was passed ordering that the pillars should be put in, even as the inhabitants had requested, and it was done, and the fears of the people dispelled.”

The spring term of the public schools opened on April 14th, with Mr. H. S. Locke as principal, and Miss Hannah McNaughton as teacher in the primary department. Sumner Farnsworth, principal, and Miss E. L. Gross, primary teacher, of the public schools arrived in town on September 1st.

After a month on the job, Mr. Farnsworth wrote the following in the *Tribune* of October 13:

“We have now enrolled one hundred and thirty-five pupils, seventy-five of these in the lower room and sixty in the upper. Great efforts are being made to do the work thoroughly, but the results are not wholly satisfactory. One great obstacle is the want of the necessary textbooks. Many pupils come to the recitation without any previous preparation. Reason? They have no books. We know of but one remedy, and that is for parents to supply them. The average attendance is about 110. Many pupils are occasionally absent a day, and some nearly half of the time. Three teachers would serve the interests of the school better than two can at present; it would give more time for recitation and provide for the formation of other classes that are much needed.”

1878

In March Mr. S. Farnsworth and Miss E. L. Gross were retained for the spring, fall and winter terms. According to the *Tribune*, the schools had never been more ably conducted or given better satisfaction than under those teachers, and it felt that great praise was due them for the happy results.

In August the Board of Education called for bids for the construction of an addition to the Sixth Street School building, in September the workmen arrived from St. Cloud and the addition was completed in November.

A State teacher’s institute for counties on the line of the Northern Pacific R. R. was held at Detroit [Lakes], Minn., commencing on October 7. Mr. Farnsworth and Miss Gross, were in attendance, and, in consequence, there was “no school” during the week.

The State apportionment of school funds gave Crow Wing county \$183, one dollar for each scholar enrolled in 1877.

In mid-November the *Tribune* says: “The Board of Education of the Independent School District of Brainerd, proposes to give a grand entertainment, oyster supper and ball at Bly’s Hall,

on Tuesday evening, December 17th next for the benefit of the schools of the district, the proceeds to be devoted to the purchase of seats for the new addition, just completed, to the public school building. This entertainment has been in preparation for some time past, and was fixed to be held on Thanksgiving evening, but owing to the Parish Guild Festival and other causes it has been postponed until the date mentioned above. Already a very attractive programme has been promised which will be further added to and improved--some of our very best talent having engaged to devote their efforts to its success--and we are therefore already confident of an entertainment that will please the audience and give universal and unbounded satisfaction. Its object--the education of our youth--is one that readily captivates the interest, attention and utmost effort of the writer as we are confident it will of every citizen of the place. Our public schools, of late, have indeed been an honor to our town, and we feel confident that the indefatigable and untiring efforts of the Board and the immediate friends of the schools, to make them the pride of our city, will meet the hearty response they merit, and that the plan inaugurated by the Board to provide the requisite furniture for the excellent new room now completed, without drawing upon and depleting the limited funds in the school treasury, will be borne to a proud success upon the stalwart shoulders of public applause. Give us your hand, friend, and help us out and thereby help yourself."

According to the *Tribune*, the results of the "grand entertainment" given on December 17th were as follows: "The entertainment, supper and ball, given at Bly's Hall on Tuesday evening, last for the benefit of the public schools, was a grand success financially and otherwise, far exceeding our most sanguine hopes--the net proceeds reaching the handsome sum of \$95.62--and even this sum would have been increased by at least one-fourth had the N. P. pay car stopped here and paid off as usual before going west. As it was, the hall was crowded, every seat being filled, and the literary, dramatic and musical entertainment was well received and quite interesting--a thing scarcely expected, owing to the very short time allowed and the unfortunate circumstances attending the arrangement of the programme. This part of the evening's pleasures was marred somewhat, however, by an unfortunate alarm of fire near its close, occasioned by a chimney burning out in the Express building a block away, considerably disturbing the equanimity of the audience, and for a time almost threatening its entire dissolution. In this connection, as the entire circumstances may not be generally understood, and as some are disposed to attach blame to the writer for alarming the audience, we desire to state exactly how it all occurred. At the moment the alarm was sounded we had just vacated the ticket box, and stood in the vestibule observing the stage through the door. Hearing the alarm, we stepped quickly out upon the landing and saw the light shining over and past the hall, indicating a fire quite near and well underway, and a crowd rushing around the corner shouting "fire" at every jump. At this juncture a lady, residing near, whose children were among the audience, came running up the stairway, breathlessly crying "Fire! get my children out of there." We inquired where the fire was, and she replied, "in the corner building," but we understood her to say, "In the corner of the building," and supposed the hall was on fire--in fact her manner and the other indications warranted no other conclusion. We at once pictured a panic in the audience if this alarm reached their ears. A rush for the door, people piled up in the stairway and jammed, smothered and burned to death--a terrible, a frightful holocaust in our very midst, such as we often read of in larger cities, seemed inevitable. How to prevent this and get the audience safely out of the hall

and out of danger was our sole desire and aim. We knew if the lady, coming up the stairway, reached the audience in her frantic condition before they had been warned, that disaster would surely follow. This all transpired and these thoughts all flashed across our mind in far less time that it will take the reader to peruse them. In fact, before the lady had reached the landing we had decided what to do. We re-entered the hall, calmly called the attention of the audience, and announced a fire in town, adding that it was thought advisable to vacate the hall, but cautioning them against a rush for the door, and assuring all that they had plenty of time, and that there was no necessity of being alarmed. The result was we were listened to attentively and, though a few rushed wildly for egress, the general audience very coolly left their seats and moved toward the door. We called upon a couple of gentlemen near the door, to aid us and, mated, we held those back who were inclined to make a rush, only permitting one to leave at a time, and giving them plenty of time to get down the stairway. In this way the entire audience would have been let into the street without difficulty had not "Only a chimney burning out" announced the true character of the alarm, when those in the hall quietly took their seats, those outside soon returned, the band commenced to play and in five minutes the stage performance was resumed as though nothing had occurred. One lady fainted, unfortunately, and was carried home, but this was the only casualty of the occasion, and she, we are pleased to learn, soon revived, and at present suffers no evil results from the scare. Instead of creating a sensation, as charged by some, we are inclined firmly to the opinion that but for our prompt action and the very course we pursued a frightful disaster would have been the result. The entertainment closed soon after, the tables were spread and a rush to supper followed which far exceeded in persistency and unanimity the efforts of a few moments previous to reach the street. Supper over, the band commences to play, "All join hands and circle to the left," and away they glide into the enchanting and exhilarating embraces of the mazy waltz, the intricate reel, the money musk and gallant gentlemen, until the "we sma hours ayait the twal" reminds all of the demands of the drowsy goddess, and soon the hall, so recently filled with mirth, music and gaiety assumes the aspect of a deserted banquet chamber, thus closing one of the most enjoyable and largely attended festivities of the season, or in the history of the town.

We cannot close this sketch, however, without, in behalf of the school district, warmly thanking the many who contributed so largely to these grand results and upon whose skillful and untiring efforts depended the very satisfactory manner in which everything passed off. To name any in particular would be injustice to the others, and to name all would overtax our space--nevertheless, we cannot pass the Brainerd Quadrille Band and Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Bivins."

1879

The public school reopened in January with three departments, under three teachers. S. Farnsworth, principal, Miss E. L. Gross, intermediate, and Miss Lydia Pedley, primary. Brainerd could boast of the best public schools in the state. The desks for the new room had not yet been purchased owing to the fact that up to the time the board was prepared to purchase desks they supposed those in the St. Paul's parish school to be for sale and made no further inquiry abroad. The vestry of the church in charge of the parish school building, meantime, reconsidered their decision to sell, however, and the board was obliged to look elsewhere and had been unable to

make selections. Pending the delay chairs would be obtained for the new room, and it would be used for a classroom.

In mid February the *Tribune* wrote: "A change will take place, after the present term, in the office of principal of the public schools of this city, Mr. Farnsworth, the present incumbent, declining to engage for another term owing to more important business engagements. This is deeply regretted by the management, as it will undoubtedly be by the patrons of the schools. Mr. Farnsworth has had charge of the schools for nearly two years with admirable success--in fact, surpassing any of his predecessors in giving satisfaction to all concerned. The last term prior to his engagement, closed with an average attendance of less than half a score, while the rolls of the present term already show nearly two hundred, and will probably reach that number ere its close. The wonderful increase in attendance has required an addition to the school halls, which was completed last fall, and farther enlargement will be required in the near future if the present interest continues to be maintained. We should not, however, confine this meed of praise for these encouraging results to the principal alone, for, with poor assistants, a principal can effect but very little in advancing a graded school. Miss Gross--until the present term in charge of the primary work, and now in the intermediate department--has performed her part with admirable skill and ability, promptly seconding and carrying out in her rooms all Mr. Farnsworth's plans for progress, and manifesting excellent government and tact with the little ones in her charge; and Miss Pedley, who, with the beginning of the present term, assumed control of the primary work, has given entire satisfaction, showing herself fully alive to the great work--thus completing a corps of teachers second to none in the graded schools of this State, and universally popular with the entire district--thus making our schools, as they should be, an honor to our city and the pride of every citizen of Brainerd. It is, therefore, a matter of deep regret that the organization, so harmonious and so admirably adapted to the needs of our schools, is so soon to be sundered, and a matter of deep moment that the vacancy be properly filled by a man who can take up the work where Mr. Farnsworth lays it down and proceed without interruption. The position will be vacant however after the present term, and the board is consequently open to applications for the vacancy."

School reopened in April with C. W. Blake as principal and Miss Gross, intermediate.

The fall term of the public schools opened in September with Prof. C. W. Blake as principal; Mrs. C. W. Blake as intermediate and Miss Ella Smith as primary teachers.

The State school apportionment for Crow Wing county was \$211.46 for 194 scholars enrolled last year.

1880

In January C. W. Blake, Principal, wrote: "The Winter term of the public schools of Brainerd opened Monday, January 5th, 1880, under very favorable auspices. For the first time since I have been in charge the teachers all know just the wants of their departments. At the commencement of the Spring term of 1879, both myself and Miss Gillis were new to the school, and though I took the utmost pains to inform myself of the needs of the school as a whole and of my department in particular, I soon found that it would take time to accustom the scholars to myself, and myself to the school.

When the Fall term commenced the Primary and Intermediate teachers had to go through the task of acquainting themselves with their departments. Still we regard the work of that term as in a high degree successful. Sickness and other causes thinned our ranks, but those who were able to do the work of the term feel, I think, better able to complete the work before them than ever before.

The opening attendance was 144. Grammar department, 42; Intermediate, 43; Primary, 59. The old scholars have not all returned as yet. Some new ones have entered in all departments. Our great want now is room. When all the pupils are in attendance there are not seats enough in the house for them. In my own department on this first day of school but two seats are vacant, with perhaps five or six at least to come.

Another defect in our schools is the irregularity of attendance coupled with tardiness. One pupil in my own department is as a rule regularly tardy thirty minutes in each day. Pupils cannot expect to maintain their grade under these circumstances. One pupil only has the honor of being neither absent nor tardy since entering school. Will the parents give us a little assistance in this direction. We shall try as nearly as possible to run the school by card time. Monthly reports will be sent each month to parents. If you do not receive them ask for them of either pupil or teacher. They can be duplicated at any time.

Call and see us whenever convenient. We will give you every facility for examining the school, and shall be glad to confer with you respecting your children.”

In April the *Tribune* wrote: “Since its [the above letter] writing the Spring term has opened with such an amazing increased attendance that the teachers are beginning to feel that they were not so badly crowded after all last term. The present enrollment is so far beyond the capacity of the rooms that it is impossible to even *crowd* them in, and the disagreeable expedient of sending part of the school home in the middle of the session, morning and afternoon, to make room for the others, has been forced upon the management temporarily until arrangements can be made for enlarging the room by adding a fourth department and teacher. This will be done by finishing the second story of the north wing, and will require a special meeting of the voters of the district to vote a tax for the purpose. The call for this meeting will be issued by the Board in a short time, when we hope to see the citizens respond promptly. The matter of the employment of a fourth teacher, however, will be a more difficult problem to solve for the reason that provision for the ensuing year has only been made for three teachers, and the Board will not have the funds at its disposal to pay the fourth. The Board is in fact fearful that the funds will not be sufficient to meet even the present demands, owing to the fact that less revenue is being received from fines than was expected. Just how this difficulty is to be surmounted is not clear. One thing, however, is beyond controversy, which is the necessity for keeping our schools up to their present high standing. No one institution in a town has so much to do with its character and reputation among strangers, and particularly among those who contemplate settling within its limits, as its public schools. The Graded Schools of Brainerd reflect high honor upon the public spirit of the town, and are the pride of our citizens, and it is the absorbing desire of the entire management that their present high reputation be fully maintained. For this reason we hope to see the present very encouraging emergencies promptly and fully provided for.”

In June, C. W. Blake, Principal wrote: “The month ending May 25th, has been one of unusual interest to the teachers and pupils of the Brainerd Schools. Owing to the usual falling off

during the Spring term the rooms have not been nearly so crowded as during the winter term, and the consequent result has been better results for those attending in every respect.

The primary department has numbered 106, but by the division of scholars in respect to attendance the number of pupils in the room at any one time does not exceed that of any other room in the building, and, as a consequence, the teacher is enabled to give more time to those in attendance during any one hour. The change of teachers in this department will of course make a break, but as Mrs. Huestis comes to us with an experience of over twenty years no one need have any fears for the result.

In the intermediate department, as in my own, the attendance has been unusually regular, with very slight tardiness. And we are pleased to observe a greater tendency to independent thought than ever before. This is particularly true with regard to the A. Class, Grammar Department and in the the matter of Algebra and Botany.

Facts that at first sight seemed insurmountable have been mastered by the students themselves independent of the teacher's assistance. It is such work as this which makes the strong man or woman, one who may be able to think and act for himself unbiased by the opinions of others."

In August a contract was let by the school Board to White & White to finish the upper story of the north wing of the public school building. It was the intention of the Board to grade the schools, in the next term, into four departments with four teachers. Prof. Blake, much to the regret of the Board as well as the patrons of the school, declined to continue in the superintendency for another term.

The autumn term opened on Sept. 27, with the return of Prof. S. A. Farnsworth as Principal, Mrs. Farnsworth, *nee* Miss Gross, and newly hired Prof. Hubbard, of Verndale, as intermediate and Mrs. B. A. Huestis as primary teachers. The second story of the north wing of the public school building was finished by the contractors, White & White, and the Board of Education ordered new Victor folding school desks and seats with which to furnish it.

In October the public schools opened with an attendance of 190 scholars and increased to 204.

1881

In April Prof. Farnsworth stated that the Brainerd schools opened with 193 scholars divided as follows: Room A, 30; B, 35; C, 63; and D, 65.

In June Prof. S. A. Farnsworth resigned his position as principal of the Brainerd schools. He had been an efficient instructor, and many regretted his official exit from his position in the schools.

In September Prof. Barrett stated that the public schools opened with a good attendance, the total enrollment being 208. A large proportion were primary scholars between the ages of five and ten. There was an urgent need of more room and another teacher in the primary department.

A citizen wrote the following to the *Tribune* on September 10: "Brainerd, claiming a population of 4,000, had its annual school meeting at the school house on last Saturday evening, the 3d, and as no reporter of the *TRIBUNE* was present, this communication may be acceptable. The meeting was held under the township organization, which is very limited in its powers, but it is all Brainerd has, and as such was held for the purpose of electing directors, levying taxes and

devising means for enlarging the present school facilities. When the chairman congratulated the meeting on the large attendance, larger than usual at such meetings, curiosity led to a count of the house, which revealed just a baker's dozen present. The superintendent of schools was not of that number; of Brainerd's five clergymen, not one was there; of her half-dozen doctors, none could be seen, and ditto her legal fraternity. Of her numerous merchants, great and small, save the clerk of the school board, not one put in an appearance. The only representative of a "business" was that of a prominent dealer in liquor, who was outspoken, but it is said to his credit, in favor of encouraging schools and erecting buildings in different parts of the town to accommodate primary departments, and thus relieve the strain upon the present building and save the smaller children from the danger of traveling back and forth over the numerous railway tracks.

The financial report of the district exhibited about \$350 on hand for teachers' wages and \$150 for building purposes. The present school building is on a lot about 150 feet square. The building itself would never be taken, by a stranger, for a school-house in Minnesota, though it might be in the back woods of Missouri or Arkansas, and would hardly be a credit to a town of 500 population. Originally intended to accommodate two teachers, one upstairs, and one down, a wing has been added doubling its capacity, and it will now barely seat comfortably one-half the children in town.

Minnesota is noted for its good schools, and hardly a town in the state can be mentioned of one-tenth the population of Brainerd, that has not better facilities and does not double discount her on the interest of their people in schools. Are the businessmen and property owners of Brainerd going to keep people with children to educate from bringing their families here, and counsel the conductors and engineers, and others employed by the operating department of the Northern Pacific Railroad to seek homes in St. Paul and Duluth and Fargo in order to obtain school privileges? That is what they are doing today.

In order to have good schools, the *people* must take an interest in them, come out to the school meetings, force the best men to take the thankless task of school directors, vote money enough to build all necessary buildings, and employ the best talent obtainable for teachers and *pay them well*; and last, but not least, show your interest by visiting the schools and encouraging teachers and scholars.

And now, Mr. Editor, it may not be amiss to rap you and the reverends of the clergy over the knuckles for your part in this state of affairs. The pulpit and the press are the great educators of this age, and when editors and clergymen don't lead in school work, it should only be when worthy laymen are found who are pushing matters to the utmost tension they will bear. Whether such is the case in Brainerd is respectfully left to your consideration."

This report was made by W. S. Barrett, Principal, for the month of September showing the condition of the public schools:

“Principal's room, number enrolled, 42; days absent, 49; cases tardy, 46.

Grammar room, number enrolled, 50; days absent, 80; cases tardy, 25.

Intermediate room, number enrolled, 54; days absent, 83 1/2; cases tardy, 75.

Primary room, number enrolled, 116; days absent, 156; cases tardy, 12.

Totals, number enrolled, 262, days absent, 368 1/2; cases tardy, 158.

This is not a very encouraging report. Pupils are allowed to stay out of school for too trifling excuses. If parents would consider that the individual loss to the absentee is very slight as

compared with the demoralizing effect upon the school, this evil, we trust, would not be allowed to continue. We hope to show a better report next month, and to this end ask the co-operation of parents.”

1882

The citizens of Brainerd were interested in erecting a second school on the north side in order to relieve the overcrowded conditions in the Sixth Street School. The money had been voted for the erection of the building and was in the hands of the treasurer. In April Brainerd awaited the decision of a committee appointed to select a site.

NOTE: I don't think the above building was ever built.

1883

In September, Alonzo Everett was awarded the contract for building an addition to the school building on Sixth street. The addition was to be the same as the wing on the north side, 22x36 and contain two rooms, one above and one below. That would necessitate the hiring of two more instructors. There were 300 scholars in attendance.

Newton Ingersoll, editor of the *Brainerd Dispatch*, wrote:

“Where is there a city the size of Brainerd that has as poor accommodations for the instruction of their children as our own. It is time steps were taken in this direction.”

“Some candidate for the state prison endeavored to burn the school house on Sixth street. It seems that the person, whoever it was, went behind the building between the school house and wood shed and whittled shavings, putting them under the floor and setting them on fire.”

Near the end of September, the primary school located on Sixth Street on the south side, Miss Laura Pember in charge, was dismissed until the new addition was finished, the number, 125, being considered too many to confine in one room.

1901

The old Sixth street school building was finally sold to A. F. Sorenson for \$275.

BRAINERD HIGH SCHOOLS

1884

A call was made for a special meeting of the Brainerd school district on the 4th of February, to vote bonds for the purpose of purchasing a site and erecting a high school building. It was proposed to build a fine edifice that the city would not be “ashamed” of and one that could be adapted to the growing city. When the votes were counted it was found that there were 106 in favor of bonding the district and three against it. This was a big thing for the city, for with the \$40,000 voted a fine site could be purchased and an elegant high school building erected. On June 12th F. A. B. King & Co., was awarded the contract to build the new school, at a cost of \$27,525, which was to be completed January 1, 1885. In July Professor James A. Wilson of Lexington, Ohio, was hired as principal of the high school. Mr. Wilson remained in that position

until 1890 when he was elected County Superintendent of Schools, occupying that position until 1910. He died in Brainerd in 1927.

1885

In 1922, Professor Wilson wrote:

“On the last day of January, [26 January] 1885, the teachers and pupils of the Sixth Street School formed in procession headed by the city band and school board, marched over with band playing and flags flying, and took possession of the new high school building just completed. Principal J. A. Wilson and others made speeches. That day was an epoch in the progress of education in Brainerd. Everybody was proud of the fine new building. It was the most complete and finest furnished school building in Northern Minnesota.”

1887

On June 16th the first commencement of the Brainerd High School was held at Sleeper’s Opera House.

1903

A large addition was made to the original high school.

1913

Brainerd High School graduated a class of 49 this year, which was one of the largest ever graduated. The enrollment of the high school stood at 248. The school was now on the accredited list.

1914

The high school graduated 34 students. According to Wilbur C. Cobb, Superintendent of Schools, the total public school enrollment was about 1,854 scholars.

1928

The Washington High School building was completely destroyed by fire on March 31st. Early estimates of the damage placed it at close to \$150,000 on the building and its contents. The Brainerd fire department received the alarm at 12:46 A. M. Upon their arrival the entire north section of the building was in flames. Thirty-eight firemen fought the conflagration for eight hours. Several roof fires from sparks blown to houses nearby were extinguished by the firemen. The two fire trucks and hook and ladder truck were in use. There was no loss of life or injuries connected with the fire. All permanent records, referring to high school students, credits, etc., were saved when Superintendent Wilbur C. Cobb and Miss Mary Tornstrom, principal of the school, and firemen risked their lives to enter the flaming building at 1:30 A. M. By 8:30 A. M. the smouldering, charred remains of the school lay in a heap in the basement. The Washington school building was constructed in 1884, with an addition constructed 19 years later to take care of the increase in the number of students. The structure was of brick, three stories high and measured approximately 175 feet in length and 100 feet in width with 15 classrooms. The school housed about 625 pupils; 550 were high school students and 75 grade school students. Trophies

won by the school, now blackened and charred by fire, smoke and water, were recovered the next day. Among the other contents destroyed were many irreplaceable memorial pictures of previously graduated classes. On April 13th some classes were moved to the second floor of the city hall. It was expected that the Methodist church would be used only until such time as the old court house could be repaired and remodeled to house many of the pupils. The school board accepted the offer of \$112,000 by the insurance companies on the high school fire loss. The first actual work on the construction of the new Brainerd High School was started on December 15th.

1930

The new Washington High School which cost nearly \$600,000 was ready for occupancy. It housed grades seventh through twelve.

1968

A new high school was built on South Fifth Street.

FRANKLIN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

1931

Construction was begun on the Franklin Junior High School at a cost of \$300,000, on the corner of North Tenth and Juniper Streets, it housed grades seven through nine. A 58-year-old bricklayer's helper was killed on December 2nd at the construction site for the new junior high. He fell through a guard rail on scaffolding 20-feet above the auditorium floor and died instantly. There were no witnesses and no inquest was called.

2005

Forestview Middle School was opened in Baxter.

GRADE SCHOOLS

In April of 1893 a contract was let, by the school board, to A. Tollefson of Minneapolis for \$39,672 for the building of four new grade schools. All four were identical and allegedly built of Brainerd-made Schwartz brick. The Riverside School was built in 1919 with an addition in 1922 and the Garfield School was built in 1921. On May 12, 1955, the school board opened the combined low bids on Brainerd's three new elementary schools Edison, Garfield and Riverside. Building permits for these three schools were issued in June of 1955.

HARRISON GRADE SCHOOLS

Located on the north side of Oak Street between Southeast Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets.

1893

In February the school board recommended the purchase of 10 lots in Block 17 of Sleeper's addition to Brainerd at a cost not to exceed \$1,500. In October the school was accepted by the school board, another room was ordered opened and additional seats purchased for the new rooms recently opened. A new oak sidewalk was also ordered laid in front of the school.

1895

Two hundred students were enrolled in the Harrison building in September, an average of fifty to a room, the building contained only four rooms. This building was already too small to accommodate the children of that ward.

1901

A mass meeting of citizens was held at Gardner Hall in March to consider the matter of providing funds to enlarge the Harrison school. About 200 citizens were in attendance. It was the sense of the meeting that the board should proceed to enlarge the Harrison school as proposed. In May the school board advertised for the sale of bonds of the district in the sum of \$10,000. By June Contractor Kreatz had finished the foundation at the new addition and it was to be ready for occupancy by September 1st when school opened. There were three rooms in the new addition.

1936

This school was demolished and a new school was built at a cost of about \$225,000.

LINCOLN GRADE SCHOOLS

Located on the west side of South Sixth Street between Oak and Pine Streets.

1893

In January arrangements were made to condemn property on 6th street between Oak and Pine for the building of the Lincoln School. Work was commenced in May on the excavation for the new first ward school house. In October the new Lincoln school building was accepted by the school board, Miss Bessie Small was made principal, and a new oak sidewalk was ordered laid in front of the school on Sixth Street.

1900

C. B. Rowley was awarded the contract, in May, for building an addition to the Lincoln school for \$9,144; F. J. Murphy received the contract for putting in the steam heating plant and taking out the old hot air system for \$1,490, both were the lowest bids. By July the first story of the addition was complete and Rowley thought he could have the building completed by the start of school in September.

1936

This school was demolished and replaced by a new building costing about \$225,000.

LOWELL GRADE SCHOOLS

Located on Northeast 'G' Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues.

1893

In January the school board approved the selection of a site for the building on Third Avenue at a cost of \$3,000. In October the building was accepted by the school board.

1903

A large new addition was completed.

1936

The old school is razed and replaced by a new structure, which cost nearly \$225,000.

WHITTIER SCHOOLS

Located on North Eighth Street between Holly and Grove Streets.

1892

In December a new site was purchased by the school board on which to erect the new school building for that part of the city. The site was a very desirable one and the board was lucky in securing it. H. J. Spencer, from whom it was bought, took the old school property in part payment at \$3,350 and the new block cost \$8,000.

1893

In October the school board accepted the new building.

1894

In January, Superintendent B. T. Hathaway was instructed by the school board to enter a complaint before the court against M. K. Swartz for assault and battery upon Miss M. Fuller, a teacher in the Whittier school. Mr. Swartz plead guilty and the court imposed a fine of \$50 and costs or sixty days in jail; the fine amounting to \$53.30 was paid.

1924

On April 11th at the meeting of the Whittier Parent Teachers Association the group celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Miss Louise Barrett's teaching in the Whittier building. About 300 friends and former students were present. Over the years, Miss Barrett had established a well-earned reputation for corporeal punishment.

1936

In 1936 the school is razed and replaced by a new structure, which cost nearly \$225,000.

2014

On July 15th the Whittier school, vacant since 2008, was sold for \$100,000.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1873

A Catholic school conducted by the Sisters of St. Francis, was opened on the 25th of November, on Tenth Street, near the corner of Main [Washington] street. The course of instruction was comprised of English, writing, arithmetic, geography and history in all their branches. Useful and ornamental needlework was also offered. Private lessons were to be given in French and German, music, drawing and painting. Some thirty students were in attendance, and more were being added daily.

1874

The Sisters of St. Francis closed their school at the end of February.

1885

After the Sixth Street School was vacated on January 26, 1885, the Catholic society was granted permission in April to use the Sixth Street School for a Catholic school until such time as it should be needed by the district. The school building was remodeled and repaired in order to accommodate the Sisters' school which would begin there about the first of October.

1887

In July the Benedictine sisters closed the Catholic school which they had been conducting here, and returned to St. Joseph. The institution was not well enough patronized to warrant its continuance.

ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Located on Juniper Street between North 8th and 9th Streets.

1909

The St. Francis Catholic School, conducted by the Sisters of St. Benedict opened in a two-story, eight classroom building.

1952

The new \$302,000 St. Francis School, conducted by the Sisters of St. Benedict, was opened.

2008

The center one-story section, built in 1952, was demolished. In its place, a two-story section was constructed between the west gym building and east classroom section.

2010

St. Francis of the Lakes Catholic School completed its \$4.2 million construction project, updating the school originally built in 1952. New space included a large computerized library with an expanded collection, state-of-the-art computer lab with a smart board, a chapel, administrative offices, nurse's office, conference rooms, small work rooms, teacher's lounge and storage spaces. Classrooms, the cafeteria and bathrooms were updated and major systems were modernized. There were 265 preschool through eighth-grade students enrolled.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL PARISH SCHOOL

Located on the southwest corner of Ivy and North 8th Street.

1873

Miss Addie F. Simons opened a private school in the Episcopal Parish School building, on North 8th Street, on April 28th. Miss Simons was educated at Lima and Springville Seminaries, New York. She commenced another term of private school at the Episcopal Parish School on August 24th. All branches were taught and the terms reasonable.

1874

The Parish School, with Mrs. C. Bloom as teacher, commenced its term on January 10th. The Episcopal Parish School opened its spring and summer term on April 16th. It was expected that Miss Millspaugh, sister of Rev. Mr. Millspaugh, would be the teacher. In July the Parish School numbered thirty-two scholars. This school was not just for the children of those who attended the Episcopal Church, but for any who wished their children to have the advantage of a select school education.

1875

The Parish School opened again on February 1st, with Miss Agnes Campbell as teacher. Assurances were provided that she brought certificates from Nova Scotia, and from the southern part of Minnesota that showed her to be in every way qualified to take charge of a first-class school.

1877

Miss Fannie Robinson leased the St. Paul's Parish School building for ten dollars and opened a private school therein on February 26th. The summer term of St. Paul's Parish High School opened on May 15th, with Rev. H. Root, A. M., as principal. Instruction was to be given in all branches usually taught in a high grade of schools, including the classics, natural science, mathematics, modern languages and music. Board and lodging was to be furnished to pupils from a distance at reasonable rates. Tuition, per term of ten weeks, was, in the primary department, \$3.00; intermediate and upper classes, \$5.00. On August 18th it was announced that St. Paul's Episcopal Church had secured Miss Agnes A. Gillis, of Lowell, Massachusetts, as principal of the Parish School. Miss Gillis was the niece of George Stark, vice president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. In September the St. Paul's Parish High School opened under very favorable auspices, with brilliant prospects and a steadily increasing attendance. By November, because of rapid growth and unexpected success, two assistant teachers were required to be hired.

1879

In March the Episcopal Parish School building was offered for rent for dwelling or other proper purposes.

Notes

The information used in this document was primarily gleaned from the *Brainerd Tribune* issues of 1872-1882 and the *Brainerd Dispatch* issues of 1883-1901.

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