
GRINNELL-NEWBURG COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

History of The Grinnell-Newburg School Facilities

Grinnell Newburg Community School District has a long, rich history of school buildings dating back to 1854. It has been stated that "to write the history of the Grinnell Public Schools is to write the history of the Grinnell Community". Fourteen school buildings have been built since 1854 plus at least 15 additions and other remodeling. Below is a document that outlines the history that ends in 1998. I will be working with our district team to complete the history of our school facilities in order to maintain the rich continuing efforts to foster learning environments for our students presently and in the years to come and to continue to document facility construction and historical information.

History: (This excerpt was found in the district office with no date or author)

Fourteen school buildings have been built since 1854, plus 13 additions or remodeling. In that year ten men contributed fifteen dollars each to erect a building 16x24 to serve, temporarily, for both church and school. This was the fourth structure in town. J. B. Grinnell directed the construction. On Monday morning the trees were standing in the forest. They were felled, cut, squared and sawed into boards. On the following Sunday the building was ready for church service. True, the green lumber warped and twisted. Wind and rain and sun penetrated freely. But where the Stewart Library is now located, stood the first school.

That September Lucy Bixby, assisted by her sister, Louise, opened the first term of public school. The second building was more pretentious. It was a structure 40x40 and stood on the present site of the Community Center. It was ready for use by the fall of 1856. It was built by a tax levy, thus forcing some of the land speculators to contribute toward local improvements. The outstanding personality of these early days was Prof. L. F. Parker, who was the first superintendent. He served from 1856-60 and the first year he, by himself, taught all classes from Primary through High School. At that time the pioneer school was a treadmill of the 3 R's. But not Prof. Parker's school! He made children eager to learn. He introduced them to the larger world. He made the school room and the school lessons vital.

Prof. Parker was an Oberlin graduate and was intensely interested in the abolition of slavery. When his friend, John Brown, drove up to the school, Parker permitted the youngsters to scurry out and see this much talked of man. There he sat on the wagon, cold, stern, silent, while between the cracks of the wagon cover could be seen the woolly heads and flashing black eyes of his passengers.

On February 24, 1871, fire destroyed this historic "second" building, then housing 350 pupils. A new one was quickly built and by fall school opened as usual. Eight thousand dollars insurance plus a tax levy furnished the funds. However, the old school bell which had been carried across the prairies had been lost in the fire.

The first graduation in Grinnell High School was in 1869. John Valentine was the superintendent. During the early years classes were small in the upper grades. By 1877 the total number of all graduates was only 45. That year Edna and Uzzle Davis graduated. They spent their lives teaching in the Grinnell Public Schools and the

elementary school on Hamilton Avenue is named in their honor. Prof. S. J. Buck was president of the Board of Education.

The "fourth" building was South School, built in 1877. It stood at the corner of Hamilton and Broad. The "fifth" building was Northwest School, built in 1882, standing at the corner of Spring Street and Sixth Avenue. This building was destroyed by fire and Parker School was erected in 1896 and named in honor of Prof. Parker.

The "seventh" building was erected in the northeast part of town in 1899. It was named in honor of Colonel Cooper, who was Commandant of the Grinnell troops in the Civil War.

Although facilities were meager and equipment was poor, much excellent work was done. In 1902 Grinnell High School became the first school in the State of Iowa to be accredited by the North Central Association of College and Secondary Schools. In that same year three young Grinnell athletes won the first Alonzo Stagg Invitational Track Meet at the University of Chicago.

Kindergartens were established in the early nineties. It was one of the first schools in the state to adopt a free textbook system. Although not a consolidated school there has always been a very large number of pupils enrolled from the rural area.

In 1904 the Senior High School building was erected, the old building having been moved to the former site of the Junior High Building.

In 1917 Davis Building was constructed. In 1921 the "tenth" building, the Junior High School, was added, containing a community auditorium and Henely Gymnasium.

Building construction took a vacation in Grinnell until 1957 when Bailey Park Elementary was opened at the corner of 8th Avenue and Reed Street. This was followed by Fairview Elementary on Hobart Street in 1960, a new Grinnell Senior High School on Sunset Street in 1961 and an addition to Davis Elementary School also in 1961. Also, during this period the district reorganized and became the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District in 1958. This, of course, added the Newburg Building which continued to operate as an elementary school for various grades until 1981, when its use was discontinued.

The next construction took place in 1973 when some money from the Bissett Estate was used to build a media center and a few classrooms at the Senior High School.

In 1979 the Grinnell Middle School opened its doors on south East Street and Fairview doubled its size with a new addition.

A new auxiliary gym and shop was added to the Senior High in 1985 and the "courtyard addition", which was a new media center and guidance counselor's offices, came the following year.

In 1997 the Senior High added 6 additional classrooms and Bailey Park and Fairview both completed new additions to their buildings.

And finally the latest new construction is a complete remodeling and refurbishing of Davis School in 1998.
