

West Aurora Schools

Wayne E. McCleery

(Superintendent 1950-1953)



Wayne E. McCleery



Wayne E. McCleery Elementary School
1002 Illinois Avenue, Aurora
Constructed 1957

Profile of Wayne E. McCleery

Wayne E. McCleery (1906-1953) was born in Victor Township, DeKalb County, Illinois. He was a 1924 graduate of Waterman Community High School.

He attended Northern Illinois State Teachers College. He received his bachelor of science degree in 1930 and master of science degree in 1935 from the University of Illinois. He spent two summer sessions at Northwestern University and three at the University of Chicago furthering his education by concentrating on advanced courses of study.

He was a teacher in Mokena and later Leland, Illinois. He then became principal of the high schools in Marengo and Crystal Lake, Illinois.

He was appointed superintendent of the West Aurora Schools in 1950. He was a strong visionary for the district's future.

McCleery undertook a program of significant school expansion and modernization for the district. This included building the new West Aurora High School on Walnut Street (now New York Street). The new high school housed grades ten, eleven, and twelve.

The former high school at Galena Boulevard and Blackhawk Street was then converted to what became Franklin Junior High School. The junior high served grades seven, eight and nine.

Also under his leadership, a major ten-room addition to Freeman School was overwhelmingly approved by the voters.

McCleery came to Aurora highly recommended by leading educators in the State of Illinois. The Aurora Beacon-News reported that McCleery more than justified the faith placed in him by the board of education of School District 129. He was respected for his ability as an educator and for his keen interest in civic affairs and the welfare of Aurora. He had "a warm smile, friendly disposition and never-failing good nature."

Sadly, McCleery died suddenly in November 1953 at the age of forty-seven. A stunned community experienced a great loss with his passing.

The Aurora Beacon-News reported that McCleery had just left his doctor's office at the Dreyer, Milbacher and Gardner Clinic in the Graham Building at 33 South Island Avenue (now Stolp Avenue) and collapsed in the building corridor.

The coroner's report concluded that McCleery died of anaphylactic shock (susceptibility or allergy to inoculation) brought about by the injection of penicillin for a sore throat. Such a response to inoculations was rare and McCleery had not had previous adverse reactions.

The funeral was held at Healy Chapel. The Reverend G. Paul Stowell, pastor of New England Congregational Church in Aurora, and the Reverend Merrill Dalrymple of Crystal Lake officiated.

The principals of West Aurora's seven public schools served as pallbearers. They were George Brock of West Aurora High School, H.H. Jebens of West Aurora Junior High School, Charles Friday of Mary A. Todd School, E.H. Ferguson of Abraham Lincoln School, Arthur Mamminga of Nancy Hill School, Earl Simpson of A.V. Greenman School and Bruce Warner of J.H. Freeman School. McCleery is buried in Oak Mound Cemetery in Somonauk.

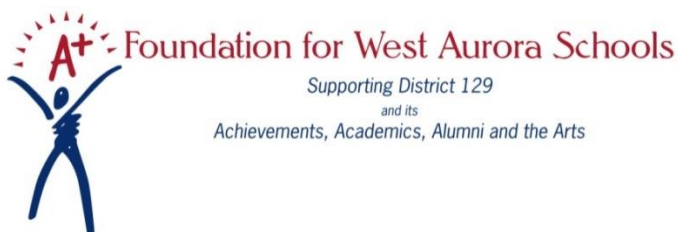
At the time of his passing, Mr. McCleery lived at 163 Buell Avenue with his wife Ethel and daughters Nancy and Margaret.

Sources for this profile: West Aurora Schools, Aurora Beacon-News and the McCleery family. The West Aurora Buildings and Grounds Facilities Inventory Report recorded the date for the construction of the school as 1957. A May 21, 1957 article in the Aurora Beacon-News indicated the school was under construction during 1957. This profile, completed in 2016, is courtesy of the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley.



Wayne E. McCleery

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