

Old School

Avenue B

Washington

Harrison

Bloomer

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COUNCIL BLUFFS' SCHOOL BUILDINGS

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Windsor Park. Woodbury. McMillen. Do the names mean anything to you? They were among dozens of schools attended by Council Bluffs students over the school district's 150-year history. Some buildings were abandoned, some were sold, at least two burned and many are still in use.

"The people who compiled the records did a great job of documenting the existence of at least 50 schools," district spokeswoman Diane Ostrowski said. "However, in some cases we don't know where the school was or when it was built. For example, the 1893-94 annual superintendent's report refers to schools the other records do not mention."

"Two new school houses have opened in West Council Bluffs, known as Courtland Place and Windsor Park schools," the superintendent's report stated. The report also mentioned the Avenue F and the Fifth Avenue schools.

While Courtland Place became the Carter Lake school, only the names of the three others seem to have survived. Ostrowski hopes "we can piece some of that information together over the anniversary year."

Originally, the town of Kanesville was divided into four wards in 1847, each of which maintained a Mormon-operated private school. Kanesville became Council Bluffs in 1853, and its voters created the Council Bluffs public school system in 1859. The first classes were conducted in rented rooms, but in 1864, the district built its first school building.

The First Ward School, later known as Stutsman, was a two-story brick building at 120 E. Pierce St. designed by architect William Ward and built at a cost of \$6,500. It was sold for \$2,000 in 1886 and became a private residence.

The Fourth Ward School at Willow and Seventh was completed in 1866 and was replaced in 1880 by the first Bloomer School, which in turn was replaced in 1923 by the current Bloomer School. The first Bloomer School cost \$8,000 to build in 1880. The price tag for its replacement came in at \$225,000 and included a clock facing Seventh Street. The clock remains in place and current head custodian Rex Rector has been able to get it working.

The district built the first version of Washington School in 1866 near 207 Scott St. Some called it Mill School because it was near Dagger's Mill. The first Washington structure lasted almost 90 years, but was replaced in 1954 by the current building facing Scott Street. The concrete steps that used to lead to the original school can still be seen on Kanesville Boulevard, but they now lead to the school's playground.

In 1867, the district built Court Street School at Court Street and Cherry (now 15th Street and First Avenue.) According to one written account, the school also was known as the 15th Street School and as the Pig Tail Street school because it was near a slaughterhouse. The 1893-94 school report stated the school was abandoned in 1894 because the lot sat so low, the building itself was "damp and unsafe."

Franklin Pierce School, built in 1867 at Frank and Thomas streets, functioned for a short time as both a grade school and high school. Superintendent Allen Armstrong had reorganized the school system, divided classes into

What happened to other Bluffs school buildings?

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"Photos of many of these buildings still exist, but the collection is not complete. We'll happily accept more and include them in historical displays and online," school district spokeswoman Diane Ostrowski said. "While the history of the buildings is interesting, it's the people and their experiences in these buildings that are most meaningful."

- 1864: First Ward School, 120 E. Pierce St., became Stutsman School after J.B. Stutsman. Sold in 1886 and became a residence.
1864: Fourth Ward School, Willow Avenue and Seventh Street, replaced in 1880 by Bloomer School.
1864: Washington School, named after President George Washington, sometimes known as Mill School, replaced in 1954 with a new Washington school.
1867: Court Street School, Court Street and Cherry, now 15th Street and First Avenue, also known as 15th Street school and Pig Tail Street school, closed in 1894.
1867: Franklin Pierce School, Frank and Thomas streets, named for President Franklin Pierce, closed when a new school was built in 1884.
1869: Center School, South Sixth and 13th, sold in 1883.
1871: Council Bluffs High School, Fifth Avenue west of Glen, replaced in 1900 by new Council Bluffs High School building.
1877: Clark School, Bennett and Franklin avenues, named for Col. Daniel B. Clark, closed.
1877: McMillen, 16th Street and Eighth Avenue, named for early Bluffs school board secretary James McMillen, closed in 1961.
1879: Woodbury School, Woodbury and South Avenue, vacated 1901.
1880: Bloomer School, named after Dexter Bloomer, first school board president and Amelia Bloomer's husband, replaced in 1923 by current Bloomer School, also at Seventh and Willow Avenue.
1880: Avenue B School, Avenue B and 21st Street, also known as Streetsville School for Judge Frank Street, used through at least 1917 and torn down later in the 20th century.
1884: Pierce Street School, Pierce and Franklin, closed in 1950.
1880: Gunn School, Linden and North Broadway, named for farmer Levi Gunn, replaced by new Gunn in 1924.
1882: Eighth Street School, Eighth Street and Avenue G, replaced by Mathew Tinley school building in 1953.
1883: Longfellow School, 20th Avenue and South 10th Street, named after poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, replaced by current Longfellow school in 1939.
1884: Third Street School, became General Dodge School, Third Street and 11th Avenue, named for Union Pacific chief construction engineer Gen. Grenville Dodge, closed 1975.
1890: Second Avenue School, 23rd Street and Second Avenue.
1891: Harrison School, Harrison Street and McGee Avenue, named after President William Henry Harrison, closed in 1974-75.
1892: Courtland Place School, Locust Street and Courtland Beach in Carter Lake, removed from district in 1929, replaced in 1950 by the Carter Lake School and returned to district in 1966.
1892: Madison School, 759 Madison Ave., named after President James Madison, closed in 1986. The Head Start facility now occupies the site.
1893: Thirty-Second Street School, 25th Street and West Broadway, replaced by a new Franklin School on Avenue C in 1975.
1900: New Council Bluffs High School, Fifth Avenue and Glen, burned in 1976.
1907: Roosevelt School, 17th Street and Avenue E, named after President Theodore Roosevelt, still in use after multiple additions.
1908: Oak Street School, Oak and Broadway, sold in 1950.
1917: Edison School, 2218 Third Ave., named for Thomas Edison, new addition built in 1951 and old section demolished in 1985.
1921: Thomas Jefferson High School, 25th Street and West Broadway, named for the U.S. president, still in use.
1924: Rue School, 33rd Street and Fifth Avenue, named for educator James R. Rue, still in use.
1926: Walnut Grove School, 29th Street and Avenue J, named because it stood originally in a grove of walnut trees, still in use.
1950: Hoover, North Broadway, named for President Herbert Hoover, still in use.
1953: New Eighth Street School renamed Matthew Tinley for military man and doctor Matthew A. Tinley, now in use as Kanesville Alternative Learning Center.
1957: Pusey, 15th Avenue, named for Harvard educator and Council Bluffs native Nathan M. Pusey, to be closed after this year.
1957: DeForest at 29th Street and Ninth Avenue, named for inventor Lee F. DeForest, sold in 1986, repurchased in 2009 for temporary use.
1957: Lewis & Clark, Grand Avenue, named for explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, still in use.
1957: Peterson School, 26th Avenue and South Ninth Street, named for Iowa Supreme Court judge Henry K. Peterson, closed in 1986, now the Peterson Center owned by Area Education Agency 13.
1957: Myers School, 37th Street and Avenue G, named for 29-year Thomas Jefferson High School Principal Ray F. Myers, closed in 1986.
1958: Crescent School, Crescent, still in use.
1960: Abraham Lincoln High School, Bonham Avenue, named for the U.S. president, still in use.
1961: Lake school, 3610 N. Broadway, closed 1981, now Heartland Therapeutic School.
1961: Woodrow Wilson, 715 N. 21st St., named for the U.S. president, still in use as Wilson Middle School.
1966: Glendale school merged with Council Bluffs, sold in 2007.
1966: Sunnydale, merged with Council Bluffs, closed in 1981.
1972: Tucker Center, North 18th Street, named for longtime educator Harmon Tucker, still in use.
1979: Kirn Junior High, 100 North Ave., named for longtime Abraham Lincoln High School Principal Gerald W. Kirn, still in use as Kirn Middle School.

grades and set up a high school on the Pierce building's second floor. Later, the high school moved to the Mill School. The building was abandoned in 1894 and sold in 1901. A new Pierce School, built in 1884 at the corner of Pierce and Franklin, closed in 1950.

In 1869, the district built Center School on the northeast corner of South Sixth and 13th Street. It was sold in 1883.

The first official high school, christened Council Bluffs High School, was built on Fifth Avenue just west of Glen. The three-story, four-classroom building saw its first graduating class in 1871, but was too small and was replaced in 1900 by a new Council Bluffs High School at Fifth Avenue and Bluff. The first high school was demolished in 1908.

The 1870s, '80s and '90s saw a school-building boom.

Clark School at Bennett and Franklin avenues and McMillen, often called Eighth Avenue School, at 16th Street and Eighth Avenue, were both built in 1877. Clark was abandoned later and McMillen closed in 1951. Woodbury School was erected at Woodbury and South Avenue in 1879 and closed in 1901.

In 1880, the first Gunn School, also called Keeline School, was built at Linden and North Broadway. In 1924, the current Gunn building replaced it.

Avenue B or Streetsville School was built in 1880 at 25th Street and Avenue B, and remained in use through at least 1917.

Eighth Street School was built at

Eighth and Avenue G in 1882, but was replaced in 1953 by a new school and renamed the Matthew Tinley School. It's now the Kanesville Alternative Learning Center, but Tinley's name remains above the main door facing Avenue G.

In 1883, the first Longfellow School at 20th Street and South 10th Street had only four rooms. Despite six additions between 1890 and 1917, it was still too small, so the current Longfellow facility took its place in 1939. The gym was added in 1957.

In 1884, Third Street School, later named General Dodge School, was constructed at Third Street and 11th Avenue.

In 1890, the Second Avenue School was constructed at 23rd Street and Second Avenue. Despite several additions, it was considered too small and eventually was replaced by the Edison facility.

In 1891, Harrison School was constructed at Harrison Street and McGee Avenue. In 1892, Madison School was built at 759 Madison Ave. Courtland Place School in Carter Lake, also built in 1892, was taken from the school district by court order in 1929, but returned to the district in 1966. The Carter Lake School was built in 1950 to replace the original building.

In 1893, 32nd Street School was built and later named Franklin. A new Franklin School was built on Avenue C in 1975 and renovated extensively in 1994.

Enrollment in the 1893-94 school year was at 4,175, including 341 in

high school. The superintendent report for that year boasted that "no Iowa city has better educational facilities," adding that the buildings are "magnificent brick structures handsome, modern, durable."

The district built Roosevelt in 1907 at 17th Street and Avenue E, adding to it in 1913, 1925, 1952 and 1966.

In 1908, Oak Street School was built at Oak and Broadway. Sold in 1950, it became the St. Patrick parochial school.

The district built Edison School in 1917 and built an addition in 1951. At one time, it served 1,200 students from kindergarten through eighth grade and was known as the largest K-eighth grade building between Chicago and Denver. However, Edison became a K-sixth grade school and the older part of the facility was torn down.

When Thomas Jefferson High School was built in 1921 at 25th Street and West Broadway, it served grades seven through 10, but the district had grown so fast that the district felt two high schools were necessary. T.J. became a high school, and the old Council Bluffs High School was renamed Abraham Lincoln High School.

In 1924, Rue was constructed at 33rd Street and Fifth Avenue, and in 1926, Walnut Grove School was constructed at 29th Street and Avenue J. Both are still in use.

By 1930, student enrollment was at 10,210, and by the 1953-54 school year, Council Bluffs had two four-year high schools, one junior high school com-

bined with elementary school grade levels, and 14 elementary schools.

The first school built after the Great Depression and World War II was Hoover, built at 1205 N. Broadway in 1950.

In 1957, Pusey was constructed on 15th Avenue, DeForest at 29th Street and Ninth Avenue, Lewis & Clark on Grand Avenue, Peterson School at 26th Avenue and South Ninth and Myers School at 37th Street and Avenue G.

In 1960, Eastside Junior High School was built on Bonham Street and Bennett Avenue. In 1967, it became the new Abraham Lincoln High School, while Eastside moved to the old A.L.H.S. building and became Kirn Junior High School. However, the 19th-century structure that first housed Council Bluffs High School, then the first Abraham Lincoln High School and finally the first Kirn Junior High, became history in 1976 when a fast-moving arson fire destroyed the building. While the old Kirn gymnasium, built in 1931, still stands at 510 Bluff St., it was sold to J. Development Co. in 2007 for \$8,000.

In 1961, Lake school was built on North Broadway, and Woodrow Wilson Junior High School was built at Avenue H and 21st Street.

In 1966, Glendale, Sunnydale, Lake, Carter Lake and Crescent merged with the Council Bluffs School District by mandate of the State Legislature and vote of the residents. Lewis Central declined and the Lewis Central Community School District built its own high school.

In 1972, the Harmon Tucker Vocational Education Center was built on North 18th Street.

It now is the Tucker College and Career Center.

By the 1974-75 school year, student enrollment was at 13,765, but the baby boom years were over. Dodge, Harrison and Avenue B schools closed that year.

The new Kirn Junior High School opened in 1979 on North Avenue, but in 1981, the district closed the Lake and Sunnydale schools and in 1986, the district closed or sold Peterson, DeForest, Myers and Madison schools.

Ninth grade was moved to Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson High schools; and by the 1985-1986 school year, seventh- and eighth-graders would attend either Wilson and Kirn Junior High.

The Glendale building, used for years as the PACT center, was sold in 2007.

The district has been remodeling its aging buildings, and this year repurchased DeForest so students have a school to attend during building renovations.

The Crescent Elementary School building, built in 1958, went through an extensive rebuilding after an arson fire in 2006.

Both Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson High schools are undergoing major renovations. The combined cost should total about \$55 million and will be paid for by the statewide 1-cent sales tax. Plans call for all buildings remaining in use to be updated and renovated by 2015.

No new buildings have been built since 1979, but this year, the school district announced plans to replace Carter Lake School with a new building. School officials are also considering building a school on land purchased near College Road and Valley View.

— Information in this story was compiled from school district and The Daily Nonpareil records.