

## **Early School Days**

### **ANOTHER INSTALLMENT OF C.B. STEBBINS' ARTICLE.**

#### **This section Treats of the Organization of the Third District, With Only Forty-Six School Children- The First School Board.**

The history of the schools, being so akin to the development of the city, is very interesting material, and many readers of the Republican return their thanks to C. B. Stebbins for the time and care that he spent and exercised in the compiling of the history. In today's article the formation, or rather the attempt to organize, the third district is described. The failure of the third district; plainly demonstrates the adage "Divided we fall."

"The trials of the third district may well make a record of itself. It was organized in 1851, taking in all the school section east of the river to the township line, with three sections south. A school was taught that year in a house built for a dwelling on Cedar street, north of Cedar river. In September \$300 was voted for a brick schoolhouse, and a site agreed upon, Michigan avenue, near the river. The next month, the site was changed to block 219, opposite the rented house, owned by William McGivern, and the director was instructed to use the "utmost diligence" in letting a contract for the house. But the next month the vote for the tax of \$300 was rescinded, and it was voted "that the inhabitants meet en masse next Saturday to repair the schoolhouse;" supposed to mean the McGivern house. Whether the mass appeared is not known.

On September 7, 1852, \$50 was voted, and the board authorized to obtain a site with or without a house, in their discretion. But nothing appears to have been done, and in September, 1853, \$300 was again voted to build a frame house. There were at this time forty-six children of school age in the district. Nothing, however, was done as to building and the school was continued in the McGivern house, The next record shows that in September, 1854, it was voted that the "moving and repairing of the house be let to the lowest bidder." It is known that the house was purchased, but there was no record of it. It was a poor apology for a house, and it was a constant expense until 1867, when the brick house on South street was erected.

"In justice to the people of this district a statement of the situation of that part of the city in the early days is due. In the vicinity of the mineral well, since developed, the owners of the land attempted to establish a center of business, and the three competing localities were long known as upper, middle, and

lower towns. So, at upper town, as at the other localities, there was built a store, a hotel, a sawmill and several dwellings. But they were fighting the laws of business and after awhile failure was certain. The boom did not materialize and everything began to run down. Store, hotel and sawmill ceased to run, some of the dwellings were moved to middle town and others went to decay.

#### A City Charter

“At 12 years of age, in 1859, the village had a population of about 3,000, the school census of that year being 1,039. A charter, including two and a half by three miles of territory, was obtained. The districts, mainly from local feeling, were unable to unite, and in 1861 the entire city was made one district by the legislature, under the control of a board of twelve members, to be elected by popular vote at a special meeting.

“Civil service reform’ in educational affairs was never called for in Michigan. Party politics have very rarely made any trouble in the schools. But to avoid any possible danger from that cause it was agreed by all that the board of education should be made up of an equal number of republicans and democrats, to be nominated at a union caucus. The first board consisted of James Turner, Smith Tooker, R. B. Jefferds, Ezra Jones, Louis Saier, George W. Peck, Charles W. Butler, James Somerville and Ephraim Longyear. In 1867 a new schoolhouse was erected on South street and on Walnut street north, each costing \$3,500 and having two rooms.

“On sinking a well at the latter place, at the depth of forty feet, a bed of stones was found, which were ground and polished as may be found on the shore where they have been ground by the waves, showing conclusively a deposit of forty feet of earth.

**End unfortunately the State Republican July –August 15 1893 is missing so we do not know if this series of articles continued on.**

*State Republican 6/21/1893*