

Early School Days

ANOTHER INSTALLMENT OF THIS INTERESTING SERIES.

Lansing as She Was Way back When the Present “Silver Greys” played Hookey and gathered Turtle Eggs on the banks of the Grand.

The articles that are being published in the State Republican of the history of the schools of Lansing are being read with a deal of interest. It will be remembered that the last article dealt almost entirely with private institutions and was unusually entertaining. This, the third article, treats the formation and growth of the second school district.

“In March 1848, a district was organized including the territory from Saginaw street, the northern line of the school section, to the southern boundary of the township to the river, including also the part of the school section east of the river, all of which except a strip in the school section was yet an unbroken forest. In May the site, where the second ward school house now stands, was agreed upon, and it was voted to erect a brick school house. This was not built, but a frame building was erected the next year, and in 1850 a school was taught by Ephraim Longyear, assisted by Misses Clarinda Gager and Sarah Bush. The school census of that year numbered 174. The number reported in 1855 was 223, an increase in five years of only 49.

“This shows how slow was the increase of population in the capital in the first eight years, for the increase in this district was no slower than the average of the town. The cause is not difficult to discover. There was at first what would now be called quite a boom, but the country gave it no business. Nearly all who came here were of limited means, ague and fever, were in every breath of air, which is to this day spoken of as ‘the plague,’ the streets were unworked in which the mammoth stumps stood sentry, those who could get away largely did so, and the bad reports, only too true, created an impression that the capital would soon be removed. It is no wonder that the new comers were few and the departures comparatively many. Yet there were a few indomitable spirits who were determined to ‘never say die,’ and the next paragraph will show.

“The last school in the above mentioned house in No. 2 was in 1855, by Rollin C. Dart, assisted by Miss Mary Rice. The house was sold to the United Brethren society and removed to the corner of Kalamazoo street and Capitol avenue for a church. On the disbandment of that church a few years later it was converted into a dwelling. Two more lots were added to the site and the main structure of the second ward house was erected and furnished at an expense of \$9,000.

“In 1859 the district reorganized under the new law for grade schools, with six trustees. The first board consisted of S.R. Green, C.W. Butler¹, Franklin LaRue, Theodore Hunter, George W. Swift and L.K. Hewitt. The last teachers in this district previous to the consolidation of all the districts were F.G. Russell, principal with assistants, Misses Harriet A Farrand, Elisa A, Foote, and Emily Nask, now Mrs. E.H. Porter. Miss Farrand has been for the past twenty three years one of the editors of the Chicago Advance. In 1860 part of the roof of the house was blown off by a storm and repaired at a cost of \$1,000. The next article takes up district No. 3.

End of Part 3.

State Republican 6/16/1893

¹ Charles W. Butler