

History of Lockport School District 91

1834/1835 - Organized school was first taught in a small log room built by Capt. Sisson as a detached kitchen for his home on what is now Division St.

1839 – First village schoolhouse was built near Sisson’s kitchen at no cost by the locals with all materials and labor donated by them. It was also used as church, town hall, and more.

?? – At some point a stone house on State St., between 6th & 7th, may have been used as a school, as well as a store and public meeting place.

1839 - First grade school built as a dedicated school was an 18 X 32 foot building at the northeast corner of 8th & Hamilton at a cost of \$200.

1857 – A 3% tax was instituted and a new, multi-room school was built. This new building with an original cost of \$30,000 was the pride of the community. It was built of stone with all wood inside, and had a beautiful clock tower. Of the nine separate schools (each its own district) in the Lockport area at the time, this was the only one built of stone, and with more than one room.

1895 - When all but the stone shell of the big Lockport school was destroyed in the fire of 1895, many people stood by and wept as it burned. School was held in temporary leased spaces until a new school could be built.

1896 – The present Central Square building (now Lockport City Hall), was built as a replacement school immediately after the fire in 1895 and served both grade school and high school students from the immediate area as Lockport Central School (may have originally been called “Lockport Grades”).

1909 – This building became a grade school only when a new building, the current LTHS Central Campus, was erected to serve as the high school.

1915 - 1920 – By this time many of our present districts were organized, most with the same district numbers and names that we have today.

1950’s – A recommendation was made for a unit district composed of Lockport, Homer and DuPage Townships, but the merger did not occur. Lockport Township schools did reorganize, eliminating smaller districts and all remaining one-room buildings.

1951 - Kelvin Grove School was built, with additions in 1958, 1965, and a junior high wing in 2000. District 91 was now known as “Lockport Central – Kelvin Grove,” with students attending both buildings.

1965 – District 91 saw its enrollment jump to 700 students (from 267 in 1948), which is very close to what it is today. The 10-acre site where Milne Grove now is was acquired.

1969 – Milne Grove School was opened. It was named for the original owner of the former farmstead, Mr. Robert Milne. Central School was no longer used as a school building as it did not meet health and safety standards. Since then, Lockport School District 91 has also been known as the “Milne-Kelvin Grove” district.

Some fun facts:

- *In 1856 a principal's annual salary was \$720. This was up to \$1200 by the 1880's.*
- *In 1891 we had a resolution stating that "All teachers will be ladies except the principal." At this time a lady earned \$500 per year for this work.*
- *In 1872 Lockport Township had 10 school districts, 10 schools (4 with libraries owning a combined total of 320 books). The school tax levy was a whopping \$8500, and total annual expenditures for all 10 schools were \$9800.*

Works Cited:

Will County History of 1878, Will County Bicentennial Commemorative Edition, Peterson Printing Craftsmen, Inc., Joliet, IL, 1973.

Much of this information was recorded somewhat unofficially in papers, now housed in the Lockport History room at our public library, that were written by local residents:

Farrington, Leslie Joseph, Dissertation, 1967.

Flory, Mrs. M. L., "Looking at Lockport" submitted to Dr. Morris Wiener.

Ott, Elmer, History of Lockport Schools.

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