

HISTORICAL SKETCH  
of the  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PORTLAND, OR.  
1847—1888

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In the sixth annual report (1870) I published an epitome of the history of the public schools of Portland.

Since then many changes have occurred in the location of schools; new buildings have been built; the old Central sold and vacated. As was anticipated, several errors in the first sketch have been discovered and some additional points have been brought to light.

It is now proposed to republish that sketch, mainly as it was then written, making corrections where necessary and introducing in its proper connection any new matter that may be of general interest. The sketch will then cover substantially, the history of these schools from 1847 to June 28, 1888, a period of forty-one years.

There is a peculiar fascination connected with the reminiscences of the early life of individuals, societies, communities and nations.

To weave these detached and frequently vague outlines into an interesting yet truthful narrative is the province of the historian. To do this successfully, requires much time and research; it demands gifts which, as all readers know, are very rare.

Many of these items are from those who were participants and who are already

## THE FIRST SCHOOL.

The first day school of any kind in Portland was opened in the fall of 1847, by Dr. Ralph Wilcox. It was conducted in a house erected by Mr. McNemee at the foot of Taylor street. It was properly a private school. It continued probably one quarter. inued pr

forever encouraged.” By a previous act of Congress and in pursuance of a contract made by the officers of the Treasury, with Rev. Manasseh Cutter and Winthrop Sargent in October, 1787, the 16<sup>th</sup> section of each township was secured for educational purposes.

In framing the act for the organization of our Territory, the 30<sup>th</sup> section was added. This provoked much opposition. To Hon. J. Quinn Thornton is due the honor of this munificent addition to our educational resources. He spent the summer of 1848 in Washington city, and by his persistent and indefatigable labors not only the public schools of Oregon, but those of

admirable schools, which for the last few years have so blessed and distinguished the city of Portland.”

#### COLONEL REED’S SCHOOL.

In April, 1850, Cyrus A. Reed, opened a school in the “School House.” He taught three months. Paid by rate bills—at \$10 per quarter per pupil. He had an average of sixty-two pupils. The Colonel remembers among the boys and girls—the Carters, Cullens, Appersons, Chapmans, Coffins, Parrishes, Stephens, Millers, Hills, Terwilligers, McNemees and Watts. There was no district organization.

#### DELOS JEFFERSON’S SCHOOL.

About August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850, Delos Jefferson, now a farmer in Marion county, began a school and taught three months. Mr. Jefferson thinks there was a district organization and that J. B. V. Butler and E. B. Comfort were directors. Mr. Comfort, in a letter, says Mr. Jefferson must be in error as he has not the slightest recollection of ever having any official relation to the schools. Mr. Jefferson had a school of about forty pupils. He received \$10 per pupil—paid by rate bills. About the same names appeared on his roll as on that of Col. Reed.

#### REV. DOANE’S SCHOOL.

Following Mr. Jefferson, came Rev. N. Doane, then and now a minister of the M. E. Church. He taught nine months, beginning about December 1, 1850. Had between fifty and sixty pupils. To the names of pupils last mentioned he adds the Davises, Crosbys, Lownsdales and Butlers. Mr. Doane received some pecuniary assistance from the M. E. Church Missionary Fund, so that rate bills were low—from \$2.50 to \$6 per quarter. His classes ranged from the A B C to fine class in Burrett’s Geography of the Heavens. He also occupied the “School House.”

Mr. Outhouse, then a young man about twenty-two years of age, a native of New Brunswick, taught continuously, with the usual vacations, until March, 1853. He is now living at Union, Oregon, and is yet in the "harness" as a teacher. His descriptions of his school, the society of Portland, etc. are quite graphic. He was paid most of the time at the rate of \$100 per month from the County School Fund. Had about twenty pupils at first.





SYLVESTER PENNOYER'S SCHOOL.

July 7, 1855, Messrs. Frazer, Ladd and Norris advertise for a “competent person to take charge of the Public Schools in District No. 1.” A young lawyer, Mr. Sylvester

On the petition of citizens of District No. 2, the Superintendent, W. F. Boyakin, issued a proclamation, March 31, 1856, consolidating Nos. 1 and 2—with a proviso that each district should pay its own liabilities contracted to date. A joint meeting of both districts was called for Wednesday evening, April 16, 1856, at the School House. At this meeting, Thomas Frazer was chosen Chairman and J. M. Keeler, Secretary; Wm. Weatherford, Josiah Failing and Alexander Campbell were elected a Board of Directors, and Thos. J. Holmes, clerk. These persons were sworn into office by Anthony L. Davis.

Mr. Campbell resigned August 4, 1856, and John H. Couch was elected to fill the vacancy.

For a complete record of directors and clerks to the present time, reference is made to a table appended to this sketch.

The first business of importance before the new district was the erection of a suitable school building.

At an adjourned meeting of the taxpayers May 12, 1856, the Board reported a building plan and estimated the cost for enclosing the building at \$4,500. A long discussion ensued. Benj. Stark opposed—suggesting that, as the county would soon be called on to erect a      , this school tax would prove burdensome. Col. J. M. Keeler replied that the erection of a      should have the first consideration, and suggested that if the school interests were more carefully fostered, a jail would prove indeed a burden, because of its uselessness in the community. Mr. Stark finally voted for the tax. A committee consisting of J. Failing, H. W. Davis, Wm. Beck, S. Coffin and A. M. Starr were appointed to ascertain the cost of different sites for school grounds. May 26<sup>th</sup>, this committee reported in favor of the "James Fields' block" No. 179—cost \$1,000. Voted to purchase 63 to 45. May 29<sup>th</sup>, a tax of \$4,000 for site and building purposes was voted 39 to 13. August 7<sup>th</sup>, Board advertised for bids. August 16<sup>th</sup>

January 11, 1864, E. P. Beebe, one and a half years; August, 1865, O. S. Frambes, three years; September, 1868, J. W. Johnson, three-quarters of a year (transferred to High School April 26, 1869); April, 1869, R. K. Warren, two and a quarter years; September, 1871, J. M. Williamson, three years; September, 1874, A. J. Anderson, two years; September, 1876, T. H. Crawford, one year; September, 1877, S. W. King, three years; September, 1880, C. W. Roby, five years.

A costly addition was made to the Central School during the years 1872-73. Nothing definite can be ascertained from the books as to the cost. Even the amount of the lowest bid, made by Mr. James Cummings, is omitted in the minutes of the Board. It has been approximately ascertained that the whole cost of that year's expenses on the Central was simply "over \$30,000." The original building cost about \$6,000.

#### CENTRAL SCHOOL SOLD.

At a meeting of taxpayers, Tuesday, Nov. 21, 1882, the Board of School Directors were, on the motion of D. P. Thompson, authorized to sell Block 179, on which the Central School building stood, for the sum of \$100,000; to buy not less than a whole block at some point farther west and erect thereon a suitable and commodious school building; to dispose of the Central School building in case a sale of block 179 should be effected.

No offer to purchase at the price named being received, the sale was not made.

Feb. 8, 1883, the Board of Directors received a communication from C. H. Prescott, Vice President of the Northern Pacific Terminal Company, offering the School District the sum of \$75,000—Cash—for Block 179—giving the District permission to remove the school building and guaranteeing on the part of his company to build a hotel on the block within a reasonable time.

Under a late act of the Legislature, the Board were fully empowered to sell the Block—but they deemed the matter of such grave importance, that a meeting of the Taxpayers was called to discuss the new proposition. Mr. D. P. Thompson presented a series of resolutions which gave the consent of the Taxpayers to the sale and requested the Board to effect the same on the terms offered by Mr. Prescott. The resolutions were adopted.

Feb. 29, 1883, the Board executed a deed to Block 179, and received therefore the sum of \$75,000 cash.

#### REMOVAL OF THE BUILDING.

P. A. Marquam, Esq., made two offers to the Board, looking to the removal of the school building—(1) to furnish, free of charge, ground on the block immediately north of Block 179, to which the District might remove the building, use the same for school

## PARK SCHOOL.

At the annual meeting of the Taxpayers, held April 8, 1878—a committee consisting of Messrs. Charles Hodge, Lloyd Brooks and Frank Dekum were appointed to inquire into the wants of the district as

exchanged in January, 1865, for the north half

During the summer of 1867, Messrs. Goodnough & Clark erected a seven room building on this block. Total amount reported by the clerk as paid on this building, was \$12,816.55.

## COLORED SCHOOL.

At the annual meeting, April 1, 1867, Dr. G. H. Atkinson moved that a separate school be opened for colored children and that the Directors be empowered to rent rooms, etc., provided the expense of this school, for tuition, shall not exceed \$800 per annum. This school was opened in September, 1867, on the north-east corner of Columbia and Fourth streets; Mrs. Abbie J. Young, teacher. The first quarter shows twenty-one boys and five girls enrolled. Miss Anna S. Northrup succeeds Mrs. Young in February, 1869, and taught one and a half years; September, 1870

one in the northern and one in the southern portion of the city and erect on each a school building.

The Board bought block 159—Couch Addition,



his gift. I have not been able to obtain any satisfactory reasons why the other two half blocks were not accepted by the district. They were still set apart as "District School" blocks in 1859; and in 1864, the one on Mill street was used. It must be presumed that after holding them for the purpose named in the dedication, from 1849 to 1864, or later, and the district not having made any use of them, the original owners, or their heirs, saw fit to dispose of them for their own use.

#### AINSWORTH SCHOOL.

In September, 1886, a petition was presented to the Board from the citizens living on "Portland Heights"—asking for a school in that part of the district. A census was taken which showed that there were nearly one hundred persons of school age in that quarter of the city. After some deliberation, the Board decided to open a Primary school only. A small one story wooden building which had served for a dwelling, was rented and remodeled so as to fit it for school purposes. It stood on the S. W. corner of Elm and Fifteenth streets. The school was named the Ainsworth, in honor of Capt. J. C. Ainsworth, a former Director, 1873-1879.

Monday, October 18, 1886, the school was opened with Miss Annie E. Knox in charge. In September, 1887, Miss Julia Cowperthwaite was elected teacher and held the position for the year. The attendance for the two year has been about twenty.

#### SCHOOL PROPERTY.

The district now owns five full blocks, one half block and one quarter block. The original cost of the five blocks and the Watson quarter block was \$65,450. The cost of

To this sketch in appended, in tabular form, a complete list of directors and clerks who have served, in their respective capacities, since the organization of the district in 1856.

#### OFFICERS—DIRECTORS AND CLERKS. 1856-1888.

| Year, beginning April, | MEMBERS OF THE BOARD |                 |                     |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1856-1857              | Wm. Weatherford,     | Josiah Failing, | Alexander Campbell. | .....                      |
| 1857-1858              | "                    | "               | John H. Couch.      | .....                      |
| 1858-1859              | J. D. Holman,        | "               | E. D. Shattuck.     | .....                      |
| 1859-1860              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1860-1861              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1861-1862              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1862-1863              | Wm. Weatherford,     | T. J. Holmes,   | A. C. R. Shaw.      | .....                      |
| 1863-1864              | S. J. McCormick,     | "               | Wm. M. King.        | .....                      |
| 1864-1865              | "                    | "               | Josiah Failing.     | .....                      |
| 1865-1866              | W. S. Ladd,          | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1866-1867              | "                    | E. D. Shattuck, | "                   | .....                      |
| 1867-1868              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1868-1869              | A. L. Lovejoy,       | R. Glisan,      | A. P. Dennison.     | .....                      |
| 1869-1870              | "                    | E. D. Shattuck, | Wm. Wadhams.        | .....                      |
| 1870-1871              | "                    | "               | J. N. Dolph.        | .....                      |
| 1871-1872              | J. A. Chapman,       | A. P. Dennison, | "                   | .....                      |
| 1872-1873              | J. S. Giltner,       | J. G. Glenn,    | "                   | .....                      |
| 1873-1874              | "                    | "               | J. C. Ainsworth.    | .....                      |
| 1874-1875              | A. H. Morgan,        | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1875-1876              | "                    | W. S. Ladd,     | "                   | .....                      |
| 1876-1877              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1877-1878              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1878-1879              | "                    | H. H. Northrup, | "                   | .....                      |
| BEGINNING IN MARCH     |                      |                 |                     |                            |
| 1879-1880              | "                    | "               | Wm. Wadhams.        | .....                      |
| 1880-1881              | John Wilson,         | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1881-1882              | "                    | Charles Hodge,  | "                   | .....                      |
| 1882-1883              | "                    | "               | "                   | .....                      |
| 1883-1884              | "                    | James Steel,    | "                   | N. Versteeg, P. Wasserman. |
| 1884-1885              | "                    | C. H. Dodd,     | "                   | " "                        |
| 1885-1886              | "                    | "               | D. P. Thompson,     | " "                        |
| 1886-1887              | "                    | "               | "                   | Geo. H. Durham, "          |
| 1887-1888              | "                    | "               | "                   | " Wm. M. Ladd.             |
| 1888-1889              | L. Therkelson,       | "               | "                   | " "                        |

## OFFICERS—DIRECTORS AND CLERKS. 1856-1888.

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| Year, beginning April, | CLERKS            |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1856-1857              | Thomas J. Holmes. |
| 1857-1858              | “                 |
| 1858-1859              | J. M. Breck.      |
| 1859-1860              | “                 |
| 1860-1861              | J. F. McCoy.      |
| 1861-1862              | William Grooms.   |
| 1862-1863              | L. M. Parrish.    |
| 1863-1864              | O. Risley.        |
| 1864-1865              | L. M. Parrish.    |
| 1865-1866              | “                 |
| 1866-1867              | “                 |
| 1867-1868              | “                 |
| 1868-1869              | J. F. McCoy.      |
| 1869-1870              | E. Quackenbush.   |
| 1870-1871              | R. Weeks.         |
| 1871-1872              | R. J. Ladd.       |
| 1872-1873              | “                 |
| 1873-1874              | “                 |
| 1874-1875              | J. D. Holman.     |
| 1875-1876              | G. W. Murray.     |
| 1876-1877              | “                 |
| 1877-1878              | “                 |
| 1878-1879              | D. W. Williams.   |
| BEGINNING IN MARCH     | “                 |
| 1879-1880              | “                 |
| 1880-1881              | “                 |
| 1881-1882              | “                 |
| 1882-1883              | Wm. Church, Jr.   |
| 1883-1884              | “                 |
| 1884-1885              | “                 |
| 1885-1886              | T. T. Struble     |
| 1886-1887              | “                 |
| 1887-1888              | Fred. A. Daly.    |
| 1888-1889              | H. S. Allen.      |