No. 5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN KALAMAZOO FROM 1830 TO 1875

by

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DEVELOPMENT
OF THE
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
IN KALAMAZOO
FROM 1830 TO 1975

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CHAPTER I

VILLAGE SCHOOLS FROM 1830 TO 1851

In order that we may have a better understanding
of the early schools in Kalamazoo we will have to ac-
quaint ourselves with some of the early laws concern-
ing education and the educational system as it was
set up in Michigan.

In the Ordinance of 1787 passed by Congress for
the government of the Northwestern Territory, it stated
that "schools and the means of education shall for-
ever be encouraged". A little later in 1804 Congress
passed an act which provided for the sale of lands in the Indian Territory, of which Michigan was a part. In this act it was also stipulated that the 16th Section in every township should be reserved from sale, "for the support of schools". When, in 1805, the Territory of Michigan was organized, all of the rights and privileges which had been granted previously were incorporated into the laws of the Territory. When Michigan was admitted into the Union, on January 26, 1837, it was stipulated that section 16 of each township should be granted the State for the use of schools.

The first law passed by the Territorial Legislature regarding schools was in 1827. This law stated that any township which had fifty householders was required to provide itself with a school teacher, of good moral character, in order that the students might learn to read and write. Further, any township having two hundred householders was required to have a teacher capable of teaching Latin, French and English. A penalty of $50 to $100 was provided for neglect on the part of a township to comply with the law.
When Michigan was admitted to the Union, in 1837, a primary school law was passed. It divided the State into school districts, each district having enough inhabitants to support a teacher. As the districts grew in population they were divided, and new ones created. This process was also used in the villages, and oftentimes there were five or six schools in the same locality, but each school belonged to a separate district. These districts elected their own officers, provided for the schoolhouses, hired their own teachers, determined the length of the school term and conducted all of the business affairs entirely separate from the other districts within the village. This condition prevailed until the villages were united into single school districts and the union schools were formed. (1)

With the preceding material as a basis for our study of early schools in Kalamasoo we will now begin with the founding of the first slab schoolhouse in

the village of Bronson, later called Kalamazoo. (2)

Preparations for the beginning of schools in the village of Bronson were begun in 1832 when five school districts, including Bronson, Cooper, Oshtemo, Alamo and Highland were set apart for this purpose. In the spring of 1833 Commissioners of Common Schools were appointed for the township of Arcadia. The first school committee was made up of Titus Bronson, Cyrus Lovell and Cyren Burdick. The village of Bronson was designated as District No. 1 and a temporary school building was constructed. (3) This structure was erected in the fall of 1833. It was built of slabs and was located on the south side of South Street

(2) The village bore the name of Bronson until it was sold to a company of men, among whom was the enterprising surveyor, speculator and politician, Lucius Lyon, by Titus Bronson. The new proprietors had the name of Bronson legally changed to Kalamazoo in 1836. Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, Volume XVIII, page 599, Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., Lansing, Michigan, 1912; Fuller, George Newman, Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan, page 345, Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., Lansing, Michigan, 1916; Fuller, George N. Historic Michigan, Volume III, page 156.

(3) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Kalamazoo Public School System 92 Years Old," October 18, 1925.
Kalamazoo School System Had Beginning Here
between Burdick and Henrietta Streets on a plot of ground which had been set apart by Bronson and Richardson as a burial place but which had never been used for that purpose. Smith L. Wood was the carpenter who built this first schoolhouse and about a dozen pupils attended the first session.

Miss Eliza Coleman (4) was the first teacher of this rude slab shelter. (5) However, this pioneer teacher, was not absolute mistress of her domain. On several occasions she had to adjourn school while the circuit court sessions were being held in the building. Church services were held in the schoolhouse on Sunday, as was the universal pioneer custom. In the autumn of 1854 a frame building was erected a little west of the slab structure, and was completed

(4) Miss Eliza Coleman married name was Mrs. Rodney Seymour.

(5) According to the recollections of a Mrs. Charles Gibbs, who lived in Kalamasoo, a man by the name of Mr. Barnard taught in the slab schoolhouse on South Street in the winter of 1833-1834, before Mrs. Seymour (then Miss Eliza Coleman) taught there. Mrs. Gibbs, (then Miss Hays) taught in the village public school system for a number of years beginning in 1841.
in time for the winter school of 1834-35. (6)

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph the school was used for many purposes. It might be well if a few examples were cited at this time. In October, 1834 a cyclone wrecked the house of a Mr. Hays who was obliged to find shelter until his home could be repaired. The only place available was the new frame schoolhouse which as yet was not completed. At the same time the schoolhouse was being used by Judge Fletcher of Ann Arbor who held a session of the Circuit Court in the front of the school, the Hays family was living in the back part of the school. A partition between the living quarters and the court room was made by using suspended sheets and blankets. The old slab schoolhouse was used as living quarters by David Hubbard and his family. (7) Abner Jones, the first Presbyterian minister in Kalamazoo, preached in the schoolhouse and here also the Methodist cir-

(6) __________, History of Kalamazoo County, Michigan, Everts & Abbott, Philadelphia 1880.
suit rider J. T. Robe, held services on his occasional visits to the village. Two small articles taken from the Kalamazoo Gazette, show how the school was used as a public meetinghouse.

"A meeting will be held at the schoolhouse in this village on Monday evening next at 7 o'clock, for the purpose of taking measures relative to procuring a fire-engine. We hope our citizens will attend. For an object like this they certainly need no urging." (8)

"Notice is hereby given that a Democratic Township Convention will be held at the School House, in this village on Monday evening next at 6 P.M., for the purpose of choosing delegates to represent this town on the 18th inst." (9)

From the examples cited it can be seen that the school was used for holding town meetings, lyceums, courts, school and religious services. It was the only public meeting place in the village aside from the "taverns". The frame schoolhouse built in 1854 was used in the South Street location until the summer of 1866.

(8) The Kalamazoo Gazette, Volume IV, Number 137, Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 6, 1857.
(9) The Kalamazoo Gazette, Volume IV, Number 166, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Saturday, July 8, 1857.
when it was moved to the northern part of the village.

From 1837 to 1851 the school system in Kalamazoo was in a chaotic state. Due to the increase in population new districts were created and as previously mentioned, each district elected its own officers, provided a school house, hired teachers and conducted its own affairs. The results of such a system can easily be seen. Some districts had good schools, others poor schools and sometimes a district might have no school at all. As the number of districts increased the boundaries changed with such regularity that soon they could no longer be defined and the original numbering of the districts lost significance. This state of affairs continued until October 23, 1851 when as much of Districts 1, 8, 11, and 12 as were within the corporate limits of the village of Kalamazoo passed under the exclusive jurisdiction of the president and trustees of the village and the consolidated district was designated as District No. 1. Beginning with the creation of the second district in 1837 the formation of new districts and the building of additional schools
will be traced up to 1851 when the consolidation of all the former districts took place.

In 1857 a District No. 2 was organized out of the east half of District No. 1. The dividing line ran north along Henrietta Street to South Street, west on South Street to the alley which ran through to Main Street in front of the Kalamazoo House, (10) then northwest to Burdick Street on a continuation of Portage Street and then north in Burdick Street, to the village limits. At the time this division was made the new district was called District No. 2. However, the number of the district was soon changed to District No. 3 in order that there would be no duplication of district numbers within the township. (11)

Further division took place and for some time a school was taught in Lot North's old bakery on the north side of East Main Street, a few rods east of

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(10) The alley mentioned is now called Farmer's Avenue and runs along beside the Gilmore Brothers parking lot from South Street to Michigan Ave.
Kalamazoo Avenue. In 1848 the first brick schoolhouse was built in Kalamazoo. This brick schoolhouse was built to accommodate the students who had attended school in the bakery. The school was built on a plot of land on the southside of Kalamazoo Avenue, near the junction with East Main Street. The school was built just west of the intersection of Walbridge Street and Kalamazoo Avenue. This was in the famous "Clip-Knock-ie" region. The significance of the term has never been satisfactorily explained. It was used with reference to the particular neighborhood mentioned above. (12)

As the population grew another district called District No. 11 was formed in 1846 out of the western half of District No. 1 by a line running north and south through Church Street. As an equitable division of the school property District No. 1 was given the old house and lot at the west end of South Street between West and Park, which had been donated for public use....

by Titus Bronson. Sally Bronson held the title to this land. Before the division of the district steps had been taken to erect a schoolhouse on the Bronson lots, but discord prevailing, an unfinished wooden building and about 50 books which had been obtained as the beginning of a library were sold to the highest bidder. The Baptists bought the building and moved it to the corner of Church and Main Streets, where they used it for several years for church purposes. The library was sold to A. T. Prouty for five cents a volume.

On the same piece of ground from which the wooden building had been moved a brick school was constructed in District No. 11, in July of 1849. The cost of the building was $606.80. John Whaley was the contractor who built the school. While the school was being built from the summer of 1845 to the fall of 1849, school was held in the basement of the old Methodist Church on the northwest corner of Academy and Church Streets.

In 1849 District No. 11 was divided and No. 12 created. This district embraced the western half of
District No. 11. To accommodate the district a schoolhouse was erected on the southwest corner of Cedar and Locust Streets by N. Root at the cost of $300.00. This building was known as the "Red Schoolhouse" and was used until the spring of 1859. (13)

The creation of District No. 12 was the last in the village of Kalamazoo, for in 1861 the districts, as was mentioned before, which were within the corporate limits of Kalamazoo passed under the jurisdiction of the president and trustees of the village and a new district for the whole village was created which was to be known as District No. 1.

CHAPTER II

BUILDING OF THE UNION SCHOOL

With the consolidation of the old districts into one new district many new problems arose. Nathaniel A. Balch, who had been the director of the old District No. 1 was appointed the director of the new District No. 1. (1) The school affairs of the village now began to show some degree of unity, and an effort was made to have equal school facilities made available to all scholars of the village. At the annual meeting held September 20, 1852, it was voted to authorize the director to employ one or more male teachers and as many female assistants as should be necessary to secure a good and adequate instruction for all students. It was further agreed that the school term should be decided upon by the director but that the term was not to exceed ten months. In response

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George L. Otis as principal for a six months period and E. L. Whittemore for four months. The Misses Francis and Alice Whaley were also engaged as teachers for six months in the village schools. 

As there were four small one room schoolhouses in the village at this time, the principal was obliged to teach a school entirely separate from those of his assistants.

In his report as director of school District No. 1 made in September 1853, Nathaniel A. Balsch made several revealing statements as to the conditions of the times. He stated that there were facilities available for only 200 of the 924 children of school age which were in the village. He pleaded with the citizens to remedy this condition. He said: "We have but 4 little school houses which will accommodate about 50 scholars each, leaving over 700 to be provided for and educated, if at all, by private m-

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nificance, this ought not to be so, and we trust will not be so much longer." (4)

Nathaniel A. Balch had been required to take a census of the new District No. 1, and while taking a school census he also took a general census. His report on the conditions within the village was very bright. He showed that the census of 1850 recorded a population of 2,507 while in the census taken in 1853 a population of 3,093 was recorded. The children in 1852 numbered 818 while in 1853 they numbered 924. He also reported: "We found also an almost uniform state of health, there being, so far as we could ascertain, in the whole population of over 3000 but 3 persons confined with sickness and each of these convalescent. We found few who could be ranked as a floating population. We found an exhibition of thrift and neatness, unparalleled and unexpected. Scarcely a single instance of equalid poverty or domestic misery." His conclusion was quite evident. He said:

(4) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Report of the Director" September 30, 1853,
"In fact we saw nothing to wound the eye or mar the moral, social and patriotic feelings of the moralist, philanthropist and christian except a lack of school facilities for 924 children and youth growing up in our midst." (5)

People for some years had realised the needs for better educational facilities. Nathaniel A. Balch stated at the close of his report that there was evidence that the lack of school accommodations would soon be remedied. The citizens on Monday evening, September 26, 1863, at the annual school meeting were unanimous in their feeling that something had to be done concerning education and they proposed a meeting to be held on October 3, 1863 for the purpose of furthering the cause of education in Kalamazoo.

In October 1863 Dwight May was appointed director to succeed Nathaniel A. Balch. One of the first official acts of Dwight May was to rent the old Baptist church which had been moved, to the south side of

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Water Street, between Church and Rose Streets. This building was divided into two rooms and the first graded school in Kalamazoo was organized here. [6] Dwight Hay was director of schools until June, 1856. During his term much of the agitation that led to the building of a Union school in Kalamazoo took place.

Agitation for the building of a high school in Kalamazoo had been going on for a number of years. As early as October 1846 an editorial in the Michigan Telegraph deplored the conditions in the Kalamazoo school system. It stated:

"We are glad to see that some efforts are being made in behalf of Common Schools in the several districts in our Village, in the way of building houses and employing teachers. The cause of education has been sadly neglected among us. The truth is we have been too inactive and too much divided in our efforts, to provide good schools for those whose claims upon us for the boon of education cannot be evaded, except in the principle promulgated by our present Representative.

at Washington, that: 'Education is the base of democracy.' Or as Mr. Wise boasted, that not a newspaper was published in his Congressional District, so here, if our youth are not taught to read and think correctly the time will come when the bliss of ignorance will make wisdom folly." (7)

In June, 1847, at a meeting of the board of inspectors, A. T. Prouty presented a petition signed by Luther E. Trask and 139 others, which asked for the establishment of a Union school, and for the consolidation of the districts embraced within the village. The petition was unanimously granted but was overruled at the next annual meeting. While the districts were consolidated in 1851 the matter of a Union school lapsed for several more years and was not again discussed until the annual meeting of the board of inspectors held in 1853. (8)

Various public meetings were held between 1853 and 1855, at which many resolutions, were adopted and

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(7) Michigan Telegraph Volume 2, Number 47, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Friday October 2, 1846.

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then rescinded, the principal difficulty was in the selection of a site, which required a two-thirds vote of the electors. Since there was no possibility of swaying public sentiment to a two-thirds vote necessary for the selection of a particular site the legislature, in 1856, changed the law so as to permit the trustees to select a site if the electors failed to agree.

The way now was clear for the selection of a site and the ultimate building of the union school. However, more complications followed. Dwight May resigned his post as director of education, and was succeeded by Frank Little, who was appointed superintendent of schools in June 1856 by the village trustees. In April 1857, Frank Little was succeeded by Professor Daniel Putnam, who became superintendent of the schools of the village. (9)

As a two-thirds vote was impossible the trustees of the schools, early in 1857, purchased from Arad C.

(9) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Kalamazoo Public School System 92 Years Old," October 18, 1925.
Balch, for $6,500 the tract of five acres at the corner of South Westnedge and Vine Streets, where the Union building was erected. (10)

The contract for the Union school was let in June, 1857, and the corner stone was laid on July 30, 1857. F. and E. Thorpe were the main contractors and men by the names of Kellogg and Stevens were the carpenter contractors. Differences which had arisen during the long consideration of the building were buried and the cornerstone laying was a public event of great interest. An idea of the enthusiasm displayed at the time is shown by an account of the event as it was recorded at that time:

"On the 30th of July the children in every schoolhouse in the village of Kalamazoo were marshalled in order and marched to the large lot that covered two blocks on the corner of West Vine Street where they were met by nearly the whole population of the town, including the Masonic Fraternity, led by a brass band. Here was to take place one of the most important events in the history of the village—the laying

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(10) The Kalamazoo Gazette, 104th Year, Number 97, Section IV, page 10, Sunday January 24, 1937.
of the corner stone of the Union School." (11)

As was mentioned above Daniel Putnam became the superintendent of schools in 1857. In his report made at the annual meeting held on September 28, 1857 Daniel Putnam made many suggestions for the improvement of the village schools and also for the more efficient running of the Union building after it was completed. The building was being built but problems of curriculum, student body, teachers and maintenance all had to be solved before the school could be run in the most efficient manner.

Daniel Putnam said:

"It seemed to me that two objects were to be kept constantly in mind during the coming year -- the first, to make the schools as good as possible for the present time -- the second, to prepare them for greater efficiency and usefulness when they shall be brought together into the new Union School House, upon its completion."

"To accomplish these two objects, in any good degree, it appeared

(11) The Kalamazoo Gazette, 104th Year, Number 97, Section IV, page 10, Sunday January 24, 1937.
obviously necessary after providing good teachers, to grade the pupils, as far as it could be done, and to secure a uniformity in discipline, in instruction and in books." (12)

In this annual report Daniel Putnam was placing before the people of the village the needs which existed for a Union school. The grading of pupils was absolutely necessary in order that the scholars would come from all sections of the village and fit into the studies as would be offered at the Union school. The school was to be for the more advanced pupils. The separation of scholars into departments according to their progress in study, was very obviously for the advantage of all, even if the main objective of the time was to advance the cause of the Union school, which soon was to be completed. Upon bringing together five or six hundred scholars from all parts of the village a systematic and thorough grading was absolutely necessary. In order to carry out these objectives a man possessing great skill in handling child-

ren, administration and public relations would have to be superintendent. Daniel Putnam was such a man. No other person has performed a more important work in the interest of education in Kalamasoo than Daniel Putnam who, because of the splendid work he did, is known as the "father of the Kalamasoo high school". (13)

A further explanation of the difficulties which were being encountered was given by Daniel Putnam. His report continued:

"Another object of no small importance can be practically, if not wholly received at the same time. It is desired for the usefulness of the Union School, to have it open with a respectable number of pupils in the highest department. Few or none can, at present, be found in our public schools, fitted for that department, nor can any be prepared during the year without extra effort."

"It has seemed best therefore, to open a school, occupying about the place of the second department in a well organised Union School, in which the most advanced pupils from all parts of the village might

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(13) The Kalamasoo Gazette, March 29, 1925.
be bro't together, and fitted if possible, to enter the highest department at the commencement of next year. A serious difficulty presented itself at the very outset. No place entirely suitable could be obtained. Under the circumstances the house on the north side of the railroad was selected, as being, on the whole the best within our reach. —The school has been commenced under the charge of Mr. W. F. Guernsey, (14) a teacher of long experience and high reputation. The number of scholars limited, by the capacity of the room, to sixty; and none are admitted, for very obvious reasons, except by examination. Both teacher and scholars seem animated by a common desire and determination to have a model school of its rank."

"The primary schools have opened, with as fair prospects of success as could be anticipated from their crowded and consequent unfavorable condition. It is hoped that constant supervision and frequent meetings of the teachers will serve to create and keep alive a wholesome spirit of emulation which will exhibit itself in improved order and instruction."
(15)

Earlier in this chapter mention was made of the

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(14) Later Mr. W. F. Guernsey was a teacher in the new Union school.
(15) Kalamazoo Telegraph, Volume VIII, Number 45, Kalamazoo, Michigan, November 4, 1857, Whole Number 409.
crowded conditions of the schools and the lack of adequate schools for the children in Kalamazoo. Daniel Putnam, elaborated upon this point and emphasized the need of an early completion of the Union school. He said:

"Allow me to present a single consideration showing the great, absolute necessity for the speedy completion of the house which has been commenced. It is already known, but not so fully appreciated, as it should be there are now belonging to the district five schoolhouses, one of which is very small, very badly situated, and in very bad condition generally. These houses will hold when crowded to their utmost capacity, five hundred and twenty five scholars -- less than one half the whole number in the village which is as before stated, twelve hundred and thirty-four."

"Sixty pupils in a single room, under the charge of a single teacher, are all that the strictest economy will allow. Where assistant teachers can be employed, a greater number may properly be admitted."

"Keeping in view this fact, and the additional one that a House is already in process of building, there is little room for difference of opinion in respect to the duty of the citizens, and especially, the
fathers of our village." (16)

As suggested by the superintendent in the preceding report the matter of organization and grading was an important one and demanded serious attention. In July, 1858, Daniel Putnam submitted a report to the trustees, proposing a plan for the organization of the schools by dividing them into four departments, the primary, intermediate, grammar and high school. This was adopted and on August 12, 1858, Daniel Putnam was made principal of the high school, in addition to being superintendent of schools of Kalamasoo.

While all appeared to be running smoothly still there was opposition. Money had to be raised and agitation continued. The Union school provided the issue which was to be carried to the State Supreme Court and established the now famous Kalamasoo Case. The Kalamasoo Case dealt with the question whether or not a community could tax itself for the support of public high schools. The Supreme Court decided

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(16) Kalamasoo Telegraph, Volume VIII, Number 45, Kalamasoo, Michigan, November 4, 1857, Whole Number 409.
that the high school was an integral part of the common school system and that as such the voters must provide for the support of any kind of public instruction authorized by the laws of the State. Since the high school was considered a part of the common school system it could receive tax money for its support. (17)

Newspaper editorials and articles show some of the problems which were prevalent at the time. The following articles appeared in the Kalamazoo newspapers:

"$8,000 Tax — At the Annual School Meeting of District No. 1, held Monday evening last, a tax of $8,000 was voted for the purpose of completing and furnishing the Union School House, now in process of construction." (18)

"THE $8,000 TAX" — "As we announced in our last issue, a tax of $8,000 was voted to be raised at the annual meeting of District No. 1, held on Monday evening of last week for the purpose of forwarding the construction of the Union School House, now in progress."

"It cannot but be a source of regret on the part of a large major—

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(18) *Kalamazoo Telegraph*, Volume VIII, Number 40, Kalamazoo, Michigan, September 30, 1887, Whole Number 404.
ity of the tax-payers of this village, that the Board of Trustees have found it inconvenient to negotiate the bonds of the Corporation to an amount sufficient to have carried on this work, as was contemplated when this subject took a definite form in the annual school meeting a year ago. -- This tax, with the usual Corporation taxes - which will necessarily be quite heavy, in view of the improvements which have been carried on - and those of the State, town, and County, will swell our taxes in the aggregate to nearly, if not quite, two per cent, on the assessed value of property, within the corporation limits."

"We submit the question to those gentlemen who were desirous to raise this $8,000 Tax, as to whether, in view of the facts which have transpired within the past four weeks spreading such a gloom over all our monetary and commercial matters and which has so utterly paralyzed every branch of our industrial pursuits, (19) it would not have been vastly better to have foregone this tax, and urged the Board of Trustees to a renewed effort in negotiation of our bonds?" (20)

With opposition on every hand the school continued

(19) Reference is here made to the "Panic of 1857".
(20) Kalamasoo Telegraph, Volume VIII, Number 41, Kalamasoo, Michigan, October 7, 1857, Whole Number 405.
to be constructed and in November of 1858 the Trustees offered to the public the facilities of the new Union School.

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"KALAMAZOO UNION SCHOOL"

"Below will be found the Circular of the Trustees of the Union School. Every study necessary to fit the scholar for our first colleges, or the ordinary duties of life, is here taught; from the elements of the English tongue to a full academic course;"

"The Trustees have the pleasure of announcing to the citizens of the Village and the public, that the first term of the School, in the new and commodious house just completed will open on Monday, the Sixth Day of December — Next."

"It is designed to make the school, in all respects, equal to any of its kind in the State."

"The course of Instruction will embrace all the branches usually taught in the best class of male and female Academies, viz.: an extended English Course, Ancient and Modern Languages, Drawing, Painting, Music, etc."

"The School will be divided into distinct Departments, and each Department will have a fixed course of Study, from which no unnecessary deviation will be made. Pupils will pass at proper times, from a lower to a higher grade by examination."

"For admission to the High School, a thorough knowledge of Mental and Practical Arithmetic, Geography, the
elements of the English Grammar and History of the United States, will be required."

"A full corps of experienced teachers has been engaged, and no reasonable efforts will be spared to make the Instruction, in all Departments, of the highest order."

"The School will be open to scholars not belonging in this District, at the following rates of tuition, payable at the beginning of each quarter."

"Primary and Intermediate Departments, per quarter of ten weeks, $2.00
Grammar School 3.00
High School, English Branches 3.50
Classical Department 4.00
French, Extra 1.00"

"Instrumental Music, Drawing, Painting etc., both to resident and non-resident scholars, will be charged extra at the usual rates."

"Tuition Bills will not be made for less than half a quarter, and no deduction allowed for absence, unless in case of sickness."

"The High School will be under the charge of Prof. Daniel Putnam, and the Grammar Department of Prof. W. P. Guernsey, both assisted by such competent teachers as may be needed."

Hesekiah G. Wells - President

L. W. Walker
Geo. W. Winslow
J. F. Woodbury

Alfred Thomas
George Dodge
I. D. Bixby

Kalamasoo, Nov 1, 1856. (21)

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(21) The Kalamasoo Telegraph, Volume IX, Number 45, Kalamasoo, Michigan, Wednesday, November 10, 1856, Whole Number 461.
With the announcement appearing in the local newspapers that the new Union School was about to open a general interest was aroused. And so on November 24, 1868 the newspapers carried an account giving the full particulars of the new Union School.

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"KALAMAZOO UNION SCHOOL"

"It will be seen by the Circular of the Superintendent and Board of Trustees which has already been published in our paper, that this institution will be opened, on Monday the 6th of December, prox., for the reception of pupils. It will be under the Principalship of Professor Daniel Putnam, a gentleman of large experiences as a teacher, and peculiarly fitted, both in character and ability, for this responsible position."

"The successful completion and opening of this edifice for the purpose for which it was designed will be an event in the history of our village which should be remembered with pride, marking as it does the dawning of a new era, and the starting point of a greater advancement than has heretofore been indicated. Under proper management and good conduct this School will become one of our proudest boasts, and enduring monument of the devotion of our people to the cause of education, and another evidence of the enterprise and good judgment of the citizens of our beautiful village."

"The Union School building is situated on College Street (22) [22] College Street is known today as South Westnedge Avenue."
about 100 rods from the business centre of the village. It is surrounded by four streets, the ground upon which it is located, being a square containing about five acres. These grounds, already well adorned with shade trees and shrubbery, are to be still farther laid out and ornamented, and we hope 'ere long to see a fountain sending up its silvery column, refreshing and beautifying the grounds. The House is of the Italian style of architecture, and is four stories high, three above the basement, and is 90 feet long by 60 feet wide. It seems well built, and has, externally, a very neat and substantial appearance."

"We will commence our description of the interior, with the first or lower story. Spacious halls run through this, in the centre, both ways, giving an entrance upon each side, and affording a chance during the warm weather, for thorough and perfect ventilation."

"There are upon this floor ten rooms. One of them is designed for a Library, one for Drawing and Painting, two for Wardrobes, two as Recitation rooms, and the other four, if needed, as school rooms for Primary scholars."

"The two largest of these are to be supplied immediately with double desks and chairs, and will accommodate between 150 and 200 pupils. (23) This arrangement, by which the smaller children are kept on the lower floor, will commend itself to everyone."

"Two flights of stairs from the halls, and two more from the wardrobes, lead to the second story. This story is divided by a hall running north and south, with one leading into it from the west side. It contains nine rooms. Four of them are small and designed for wardrobes, the others for recitation and school rooms for scholars in the Grammar and Intermediate departments."

(23) The large recitation room on the east side was under the direction of Miss Hicks and the other recitation room was under Miss Williams.
"The main Grammar school-room is on the east side of the hall, and is one of the finest rooms in the building. It is 31 x 49 feet, and opening out of it are two recitation-rooms of good size. It is seated with double combination desks and seats, and will accommodate 156 scholars. This room will be under the charge of Mr. Guernsey, who is already well known among us as a teacher, with one or two female assistants." (24)

"On the opposite side of the main hall are two rooms, one 31 x 37, the other 31 x 26 feet, seated in the same style as the Grammar school."

"These rooms together will seat 178 pupils, and will be under the charge of Miss France and Miss Howard, (25) both of whom are experienced teachers. These rooms are designed especially for scholars in the Intermediate department, between the Primary and Grammar schools."

"Two flights of stairs from the halls and one from a wardrobe lead to the third story, which is divided by passages in the same way as the second. This story also contains nine rooms. Three of them are ward-robes, one or two may be used as Music rooms, one as a room for apparatus, and two or three for recitations. This story is to be used for the High School. The main room, which is the largest in the house, is on the east side of the hall, and is 45 x 68 feet. It will accommodate, when entirely filled, with single desks and chairs, between two and three hundred pupils. Seated with common settees or slips the room will accommodate, for public occasions, a much larger number of persons. It is, at present, only partly filled with furniture. This furniture consists of single desks, two feet long, and chairs. Eighty of these have been furnished, and more will be obtained.

(24) Mr. Guernsey was assisted by Miss Sleeper and also a part of the day, by one of the teachers from the High School.

(25) Miss Howard was assisted a part of the day by Miss Walbridge.
if the number of scholars should make this necessary. This department will be under the immediate charge of Professor Putnam, assisted by Miss Woodward in the female department. One male assistant (26) will be employed in the mathematics, and such other help as may be needed."

"The Drawing and Printing will be taught by Miss Forbes, who is already well known among us. The arrangements in respect to Music are not yet entirely completed, but competent instructors will be secured in that department."

"It should be understood, if it is not already, that the teachers of Music, Drawing and Painting etc., are not to be paid by the District, but receive only the tuition of their own pupils, so that the expense of the school is not increased by the teaching of these branches."

"We have the best of assurances, the acquirements, character and ability of Prof. Putnam, that the instruction in the High School in all branches, will be of the best character."

"Thus it will be seen that this institution affords the very best facilities for obtaining - under the most favorable circumstances - a first class education, either in the commonly taught branches, or still higher, an acquaintance with the languages, and preparation for a thorough classical course. The High School is intended as preparatory to the higher walks of knowledge. The lighter but now essential accomplishments of Music, Painting, and Drawing, French, etc., have each their departments, and all benefits of a first-class boarding school, without their evils, are here attainable. There is room enough, too for the children of the village, and for two hundred others, whom we confidently expect will become pupils of this school."

(26) The male assistant to Professor Daniel Putnam was a man by the name of Mr. Halbert.
"We have thus given our readers as clear a view as possible of the interior arrangements of the house and school. Want of space only has prevented us from giving details of many other matters of interest regarding the building, the mode of heating and ventilation, the convenient means of ingress and egress, the beauty and elegance of the larger rooms, and the magnificent sweep of the surrounding valley which the windows of the upper stories command; the large and airy, wide and spacious halls, and other noticeable features, but we hope our citizens will see and admire these with their own senses."

"The house will be dedicated and opened with appropriate public exercises of which we will give a more extended account next week." (27)

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Classes began in the new Union School on December 6, 1868 in the high school department located on the third floor. (28) Even while classes were being held on the third floor the first two floors were being completed, and the heating plant installed and tested. Dedication of the House was delayed several times.

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(27) The Kalamazoo Telegraph, Volume IX, Number 47, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Wednesday, November 24, 1868, Whole Number 463.
(28) The Kalamazoo Telegraph, Volume IX, Number 49, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Wednesday, December 1, 1868, Whole Number 464.
Finally, the building was fully opened and dedicated on January 27, 1859. [29] The dedication was one of the social highlights of the year. The Kalamazoo Telegraph gives a brief description of the scene:

"The Dedication exercises of the Kalamazoo Union School, took place at the School building on Tuesday evening, and passed off to the satisfaction and delight of an immense throng of people who turned out to witness the performances. The school was thus thrown open to the uses for which it was designed under the most happy and favorable auspices. The event is one of the most important in the history of the village, and as a mark of progress which we are making in educational and reformatory efforts, will attract the attention of all who shall have any acquaintance with it now, and will stand an enduring monument to the public spirit of our community." [30]

Rev. Freeman [31] made the main address of the occasion. Daniel Patnam accepted the keys of the building and pledged to the assembly his all in return for the trust.

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[31] Rev. Freeman was the Episcopal minister at this time in Kalamazoo.
and confidence placed in him. The school was completed, classes had started and the village of Kalamazoo had undertaken and completed the most arduous task it had ever attempted in its history. Ten years later the Kalamazoo Directory makes mention of the Union School. It said that the school was an ornament to the village and that it was said at the time that it was the best building of its kind in the State. (32) The entire cost of the building, grounds, and furniture was about $45,000. (33)

The construction of the Union and the opening of the high school department were not, however, to bring a close to the controversial differences and the development of opposing factions of opinion in matters concerning the growth of the school system.

While the Union School was the pride of Kalamazoo it was not built to withstand hard use and elements for many years. As early as 1875 and again in 1879

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(33) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Kalamazoo Public School System 92 Years Old," October 18, 1925.
the local newspapers carried rumors that the building was unsafe and that it had not been constructed safely. This aroused fear in the minds of the students and also in the minds of the parents. Feelings had been strained almost to the breaking point when plans for the Union school had been proposed and passed. Now again people felt that this was propaganda which was coming from the board who, it was said, wanted to erect two modern attractive buildings which would involve an expenditure of about $40,000. (34)

Rumors also spread that as a result of an earthquake, wide cracks had shown up in the walls. These rumors were helped on their way by the students as well as by those who were deliberately trying to break down the school system in Kalamazoo. Superintendent E. A. Fraser stated in his annual report made to the Board that there were thousands of absent marks upon the school records because of the unrest prevailing in the minds of the students and parents concerning

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(34) *The Kalamazoo Gazette*, 104th Year, Number 97, Section IV, page 10, Sunday January 24, 1937.
the safeness of the Union building. Not only was attendance hindered in the Union School but he went on to say that the psychological effect had kept the per cent of students from increasing in the various other schools in Kalamazoo. (35)

Several recommendations had been made to condemn the Union building. Finally the school board added its consent. "We condemn the building as useless and unfit for further use for school purposes and recommend that it be pulled down from roof to foundation and rebuilt in a safe and proper manner." (36) The citizens of Kalamazoo still would not agree with the findings of the board and it was not until a committee of 15 citizens completely outside of the school board made an investigation and came out with the same recommendation that the Union School was torn down shortly after 1880.

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(36) The Kalamazoo Gazette, 104th Year, Number 97, Section IV, page 10, Sunday January 24, 1937.
CHAPTER III

SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM 1851 TO 1875

From the consolidation of all the school districts in the village of Kalamazoo in 1851 to the completion of the Union school in January, 1859 little was done for education in Kalamazoo except as it would benefit directly the project under way in the building of the Union school. Everything was being geared to the high school. Superintendent Putnam in his report stated that the instruction in the district schools would be altered in order that the students would be prepared to enter the new Union school upon its completion.

With these ends in mind the village board took possession, in the summer of 1857, of a building which was known as the "old branch" of the university. It was moved to the north side of Willard Street, between West and Colley Streets. (1) Here was opened a two

room school in the fall of 1857. The school remained in operation until the students were transferred to the new Union building in 1859. However, the building was retained by the village board and was used when needed for school purposes until 1870 when it was sold to Bush and Patterson. In November of 1870 the building was again leased and school was held in it until 1876 when the pupils were transferred to the Frank Street School building. (2)

An important change in school administration was made during Professor Daniel Putnam's superintendency. On February 22, 1859 (3) the control of the schools of Kalamazoo was taken from the village board and lodged in six trustees which made up the first board of education. It was expressly provided that these trustees should be equally divided among the several political parties so that there would be "no partison control" of school matters. On September 2, 1859 a call for a

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(2) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Kalamazoo Public School System 92 Years Old." October 18, 1928.
meeting at the Court House on Saturday evening, September 5, 1859 (4) was made by a group of citizens for the purpose of nominating suitable candidates to constitute the board of education. The belief was stated that "the educational interests of the village ought not to be subject to the fluctuations and passions of politics" (5) and, therefore, the citizens were requested to meet regardless of party lines.

The first school board was elected on September 5, 1859. So the members would have 3 year terms expiring in alternating years the men were elected for terms of three, two and one, years at this first election. The board was to serve without compensation (6)

The men elected were: Hezakiah C. Wells and Israel Kellogg for 3 years; David S. Walbridge and Curtis W. Hall for 2 years; and, Silas Hubbard and Frank Little for 1 year. (7) The division of the board among the

(4) The Kalamazoo Gazette, September 2, 1859.
(5) Ibid.
(7) The Kalamazoo Gazette, 104th Year, Number 97, Section IV, page 10, Sunday January 24, 1937.
various political parties was carried out and the precedent was retained with but one exception, that in 1861.

Owing to the extension of the village limits a small one-story wooden building known for many years as the Portage school came into the possession of the school district in 1859. (8) It originally stood on Portage Street but was moved to Lake Street, eight rods east of Portage Street in 1861.

In 1861 a school was established for the colored children of the village in a building at North and Walbridge Streets, but this separation from white children was discontinued in 1871, when some legal difficulty stopped the separation. Classes continued to be held in this school, which was then called the "East School", until October, 1872 when the pupils were transferred to the new Frank Street School.

The Frank Street school was considered "a model of comfort and convenience" and was erected during

---------(8) Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections.,
the spring and summer of 1876. It was an eight room, two story, building, seating 400 pupils, and at the time it was erected it was considered large enough to meet the school needs of the town for many years. However, as early as November, 1875 it was overcrowded, and an old dwelling in Summer Street, North of Kalamazoo Avenue, was rented and used for a one-room school, with 48 pupils. This school was called the Northwest school. (9)

More schools were being added as the need increased.

In 1865 an eight-room wooden structure known as the Lovell Street school was erected at Lovell and Pine Streets at a cost of $8,000. It was opened in 1867 and had accommodations for 375 pupils. It was said in the Kalamazoo Directory of 1867-8 that: "A large and commodious building is now in course of erection on the Dewing lot near the east end of Lovell Street. It is now nearly ready for use." (10)

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(9) The Kalamazoo Gazette, "Kalamazoo Public School System 92 Years Old," October 18, 1925.
(10) Thomas, James M. Kalamazoo Directory and Business Advertiser for 1867 and 1868. Stone Brothers, Telegraph Office, 1867.
The last bit of building within this period of the Kalamazoo school system was done in 1875 at Lake and Russell Streets where a lot of one acre was purchased for $900 and in 1877 a two-story, four-room brick schoolhouse was built on it for $4,500.

Changes were taking place in the administration of the school system as well as in the construction of school buildings. In 1865 Professor Daniel Putnam resigned his post as superintendent of schools, to accept a professorship in the Ypsilanti State Normal College. He was succeeded by Elisha Fraser. Austin George replaced Elisha Fraser as superintendent and high school principal in 1873. Austin George immediately set about to change the course of study, still operating as it had been originally arranged by Daniel Putnam, with 12 grades below the high school. He reduced 12 grades below the high school to eight, and divided each grade into quarters of ten weeks each. In 1875 the "intermediate department" was dropped, and the primary, grammar, and high school were the only departments left. Each department had
four grades. An eighth grade certificate was first given in 1875, when formal graduation exercises were held for eighth grade pupils. (11)

The Kalamazoo school system had grown from a rude slab structure, with one teacher and a dozen pupils in 1833 to a large system of grade schools, a high school, a superintendent of schools, forty teachers and a little over 2,000 pupils in 1875. So great had been the expansion that, during the administration of Amos George, the duties of high school principal were taken from him and he was given as his only duty the job of superintendent of the Kalamazoo Public Schools.

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