

Early Boonesboro schools give rise to Lincoln and Garfield

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We have recently explored the history of Lowell and Bryant Schools in Boone's first and second wards, but there remain two schools whose history overlaps with those now departed schools, namely Lincoln and Garfield Schools.



Pictured above, the old White School was built in 1858 at a cost of \$2,000. It was located at the site of the current Garfield School and used as a school until 1910.

The first Lincoln School was constructed in 1867 on the same location as the current building. For many years, it was known as the "Old Brick School." Unlike Bryant and Lowell, Lincoln School originally did not serve the City of Boone, but was located at the eastern edge of Boonesboro (West Boone). Although Boonesboro merged with Montana (Boone) in 1888, the Boonesboro-Boone school districts did not merge until 1894

Boone County was formed in 1847 and the county's first school was built in 1849. It was located southwest of Boonesboro near Honey Creek in what is today part of McHose Park. It was a log structure and the site is identified by a marker. At the time, the school was the only county building and it served as a courthouse and meeting place as well as a school.

Boonesboro became the county seat in 1851 and during the next few years, the town quickly built two schools. Both were located on the present site of Garfield School, now home to the Boone Community Theatre. The first, a log building, was erected in 1856. This structure also served as "as a courthouse, meeting house and public hall." The second school, a two-story frame building which replaced the log structure, was built in 1858 at a cost of \$2,000. It was known as the "White School" because of its white clapboard exterior. The "White School" was used until 1910 when it was superseded by the present Garfield building.



Pictured above is the current Garfield School, built in 1910. The school was renovated several times with additions built in 1939 and 1962. It currently houses the Boone Community Theatre.

The "Old Brick School" was described by the 1880 History of Boone County "as among the most credible in the state. The school-house in the east part of the town was erected during the fall of 1867. It is two stories high; has two rooms in the first story and three in the second story. It is large enough to accommodate three hundred pupils." Using the 1880 History as her source, Olive Parks Myers (a former Lincoln school student, 1904 Boone High School graduate and in 1946, the Boone County Recorder) in her brief 1945/46 account of Lincoln School notes that the "building was finished in good style and was furnished with Sherwood's cast iron seats and desks." Exclusive of furniture, the building cost \$14,000 to build. Myers goes on to note that some time after the construction of the building "a large crack appeared in the north wall of the 'grammar room' and the building was promptly condemned." Students were sent home until the walls were braced with iron rods. The repairs were sufficient to allow use of the room for another 70 or so years.

During its early years, "Old Brick" served both as a grade and high school, while the "White School" continued to teach younger primary students until 1910. High school students attended class in a room referred to as the "high room". They

were instructed in Latin, astronomy, geology, botany, and zoology in addition to grammar school classes such as English or history.



The 1962 addition to Garfield School included this first grade classroom. The room was 28 feet by 40 feet, six inches, and contained a vestibule and wardrobe area. The addition was joined to the old parts of the school by a glass enclosed corridor.

According to an article in the Boone News Republican's 1965 Centennial Edition, which was based on Clair Emil Abbotts' 1956 ISU master's thesis, History of the Boone High School, as early as 1873 an attempt was made to merge high school classes in Boone and Boonesboro. A law, passed in January of 1873 by the 13th Iowa General Assembly, authorized the establishment of county high schools in counties with populations of 2,000 or more residents. Although a site for a high school was selected, it was never built. Consequently, in 1875, Boone County's first high school class, consisting of four students, graduated from "Old Brick".

Each year between 1875 and 1878, the proposition to merge the Boone and Boonesboro high schools was again raised, only to be shot down each time, the newspaper reported. Finally, after much wrangling, an election in August of 1893 resolved the issue and the merger of the Boone and Boonesboro high schools finally occurred in 1894. The vote in Boonesboro to join the schools was 76 for, 9 against. The Boone vote was 27 for and 8 against. No longer did "Old Brick" serve Boonesboro high school students.

After 1892, when the Consolidated School Districts of Boone and Boonesboro decided on names for Boone schools, both the "White School" and "Old Brick School" were officially named for assassinated presidents. "White School" became Garfield School after James A. Garfield (1831-1881), 20th President of the United States, and "Old Brick" became the first Lincoln School, named for Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th President of the United States.



Above is a photograph of the first Lincoln School, which was affectionately known as the "Old Brick School."

"Old Brick" and its reincarnation as Lincoln School had several famous students including Curtis D. Wilbur (1868-1954), Secretary of the Navy under President Calvin Coolidge, and his brother Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur (1875-1949), President of Stanford University and Secretary of the Interior under President Herbert Hoover. Later, famed Iowa broadcaster Jack Shelley (1912-2010) attended the first Lincoln School.

The first Lincoln School continued in use until 1939. Like the first Bryant and Lowell Schools, the old brick building was showing its age. In the mid 1930's, the Boone School Board decided to apply to the Public Works Administration (PWA) for a grant to build new buildings to replace the three aging schools. Also in the application was a request to erect an addition onto Garfield School. The PWA awarded Boone \$162,603 to construct the schools and the addition to Garfield. The successful government grant represented 45 percent of the cost of construction. The remaining 55 percent was raised by a local bond issue.

Designed in a style known as "Depression Modern" or "WPA Moderne", Lincoln, Lowell and Bryant Schools were designed by the architectural and engineering firm Dougher, Rich & Woodburn of Des Moines. The architects were responsible for the design of a number of public buildings in Iowa during the 1930's through the 1950's, including seven courthouses and

numerous schools. Many of the buildings are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the same time that the three new schools were being designed and built in Boone, Dougher, Rich & Woodburn designed the current Boone City Hall, which was dedicated on March 9, 1940 and built at a cost of \$188,091, of which \$84,000 was in PWA funds.



Above is a photograph of the first Lincoln School, which was affectionately known as the "Old Brick School." The old Lincoln, Lowell and Bryant Schools were razed early in 1939 and cornerstones for their new replacements were laid during the summer. In her history, Olive Parks Myers described the laying of the Lincoln School cornerstone. "At the laying of the cornerstone of the new Lincoln building, an informal ceremony was held one Thursday afternoon during summer vacation. Those present were Henry L. Wallace, president of the school board; Josephine Halliday, principal of Lincoln School; Mary Canfield Dale, a member of the first graduating class from Lincoln; L. R. Johnson, secretary of the school board; R. M. Wilson, treasurer of the school board; C. E. Lincoln, superintendent of construction; and a small number of citizens."

Myers goes on to state that "a copper box [time capsule] was laid under the cornerstone. This box contained many articles of interest and value," including "a Bible" and "several copies of the Boone-News Republican depicting the various stages in the new school campaign." Also enclosed in the time capsule was the contract for the construction of the school, "clippings from other papers concerning the construction of the new schools"[Lowell and Bryant Schools as well as Lincoln School] and "a history of the Lincoln P. T. A. and Josephine Halliday, principal."



Above are interior views of Lincoln School in 1946. The photographs are from A.B. Grimes' 1946 history of Boone schools, "Through the Years: 1846-1946."

A copy of the program for the school's 'Last Round-Up', at which "hundreds of old 'Brick' and Lincoln students gathered for a last goodbye to the old building," was placed in the time capsule, according to Myers. Other items enclosed in the time capsule were: "a list of graduates from Boonesboro and a list of the names of the pupils attending school at the time the old building was torn down;" a list of the school board members, teachers and other staff members, and "a letter from L. R. Johnson," secretary of the Board of Education, "to the pupils of the school." In the copper box as well were "copies of various WPA and PWA forms; a history of PWA by J. Bryon Tusant, resident engineer; a new telephone directory;" and "an envelope addressed to the architects which bears stamps from the New York World's Fair and the San Francisco Exposition." Photographs of the president of the school board and the last class of the old Lincoln School with the sixth grade teacher and principal Josephine Halliday, were also enclosed.



Lincoln School

BHS Class 1957

Construction of the new schools continued throughout the fall. At the same time, construction began on the new Garfield addition, which included a kindergarten room, an additional classroom, a new heating plant and up-to-date lighting. The addition, plus major repairs and renovations to the older school building, were completed early in 1940. A half block also was purchased for needed playground space at Garfield.

The new Lincoln, Lowell and Bryant Schools were dedicated by Lt. Governor Bourke B. Hickenlooper on April 5, 1940, although the schools had been in session for the previous month.



The new Lincoln School, built in 1939, was dedicated on April 5, 1940.

In her history of Lincoln School, Myers recounts a program held in the new school shortly after it opened, entitled, "Listen, The Flag." The program, which was originally written for Des Moines children, was adapted by Josephine Halliday for Boone. Present during the program was Frank Ritter, Boone County's last Civil War veteran. He wore his Civil War uniform "which had been pieced by bullets." Ritter was 94 at the time. Myers described the evening event in the following manner: "An impressive scene was the feeble old gentleman sitting on the stage in his easy chair, the Spanish [American] War veterans Edward Cordell and John Reid, dressed in suits of that wartime, stand on each side of his chair." Myers goes on to fill in the tableau: "Another impressive scene was that of two World War I veterans dressed in their khaki uniforms, standing at attention at either end of the stage silhouetted against the Flag and a guiding light directing a Red Cross nurse to the center of the stage. Mr. Ritter was anxious and happy to perform once more an act for his country by helping to instill loyalty and love for America in the hearts and minds of the youth of that evening." Ritter died on June 21, 1946 at the age of 100. He was born on March 28, 1846, in Ohio.

The year 1962 marked another building boom for Boone schools. A second addition to Garfield was added that year, which included a multi-purpose room with a stage. Also in 1962 an addition was made to Lincoln School, and the first Page School was replaced by the current Page School building.

Garfield School closed at the end of the 2003/2004 school year. It was later purchased by the Boone Community Theatre and is used as a playhouse and for other public events. Lincoln School, of course, is still in operation.



NEW LINCOLN SCHOOL, BOONE, I.A. 2247.