

Vintage Venues: Rapids high school started in 1850

Nancy Quick, For Daily Tribune Media 6:02 a.m. CDT July 20, 2015

In celebration of south Wood County's rich history, Vintage Venues — a Daily Tribune weekly feature — puts the spotlight on the past and the story behind some of the most historically significant local sites.

Lincoln High School, now at 1801 16th St. S.

Buy Photo

(Photo: Deb Cleworth/Daily Tribune Media)

History: The first high school in Grand Rapids was built in 1850 in what would be 630 Eighth St. N. today. The second high school was built in 1861 on lots that the district bought from Joseph Wood on Block 22, not far from the first school. The second school was a small frame building that was moved to the fairgrounds in 1882, where it burned. Dr. G. F. Witter was the first superintendent of this school.

Work on the Howe Grade/High School began in 1872 and was dedicated in 1876. I.N. Stewart was the first principal. Students attended high school at that location for more than 25 years. That building was demolished and a new Howe Elementary School was built at 221 Eighth St. N. — on the same grounds — when a new high school was built on Lincoln Street.



The present Howe Elementary School is on the right and the old Howe Elementary/High School is the two-story building on the left. Immanuel Lutheran Church can be seen in the background. *(Photo: Courtesy of Nancy Quick)*

There have been three Lincoln high schools. The first, built in 1902, cost \$55,000. According to records, it was among the most modern schools in the state. When it was nearly completed, it was suggested to J. D. Witter that he outfit the third floor as a domestic science school, at a cost of about \$10,000.

Before the school was finished, Witter died and his will bequeathed \$50,000 to the Board of Education to use as the board saw fit. The money was used to build the Witter Manual Training School in 1907, next to Lincoln High School. H.S. Youker was the superintendent of both schools.

Youker asked the state superintendent for a copy of the outline for mechanical courses and was told that there was none. The superintendent went on to say that the equipment in the Witter School was better than they had in Madison and Youker could formulate his own courses in domestic science and manual training.

Lincoln was the first Wisconsin high school to graduate the first class that had the benefit of a complete course, beginning with kindergarten through the grades and through the manual training or domestic science course, and graduate in the proper length of time. The school served the community for many years before it was demolished.

The old Lincoln School was demolished during the summer of 1931 and the second Lincoln was built in its place with many special features that included a state-of-the-art fieldhouse that could seat 5,000. In addition to sports events, many performances, student and professional, graced the fieldhouse stage through the years.

The school cost \$600,000 and was made possible because Mayor George W. Mead provided financial support and backing. Mead dedicated the school on May 29, 1931. Aaron Ritchay was principal at this school for 33 years. Today, the school, located at 311 Lincoln St., is home to Wisconsin Rapids East Junior High School.

Buy Photo



The current Lincoln High School is at 1801 16th St. S. (Photo: Deb Cleworth/Daily Tribune Media)

The third and current Lincoln High School was built in 1979 at a cost of \$11 million. It took time to get the referendum approved by voters and, when completed, was referred to as a "dream come true" for many in the district. When built, Lincoln High School had the largest fieldhouse in central Wisconsin and the campus included an athletic field with a track and tennis courts. Timothy Laatsch was principal and Tom Lenk superintendent when it was built.

Lincoln High School is located at 1801 16th St. S. and will implement a trimester schedule this fall. More than 1,100 students in grades 10 to 12 were enrolled in the 2014-15 school year. Current administrators include principal Ronald Rasmussen and associate principals Casey Drake and Rod Henke. Colleen Dickmann is the district superintendent.

Interesting fact: Centralia High School was built in approximately 1868. It was a brick building located in the area where Lowell School was later built. According to the deed, the property was owned by William B. Naylor and would revert to him if the property was used for anything other than a school.

— Contact Nancy Quick at 715-423-8170 or redquick@wctc.net (<mailto:redquick@wctc.net>) with ideas for Vintage Venues.

Read or Share this story: <http://wrtnews.co/1JbjmKi>

TOP VIDEOS



[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364695577001\)](#)

Tuesday's forecast: Cold front breaks heat in East

[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364695577001\)](#)

02:51



Where to find the cheapest beer around the world

[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364604948001\)](#)

[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364604948001\)](#)

01:01



Tuesday's forecast: Cold front breaks heat in East

[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364599480001\)](#)

[\(/videos/news/3609784822001/4364599480001\)](#)

02:51

MORE STORIES



Are police solving fewer rape cases?

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/investigations/2015/07/20/police-solving-fewer-rape-cases/30432053/\)](#)

July 20, 2015, 4:23 p.m.



Goose's Pub turns into Layla's place

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

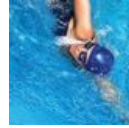
[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/20/laylas-pub-wisconsin-rapids-new-ownership/30428861/\)](#)

July 20, 2015, 3:27 p.m.



**YOU Magazine: Summer swim
safety tips from YMCA**

(/story/life/style/you/2015/07/17/magazine-
summer-swim-
safety-tips-
ymca/30289883/)

**(/story/life/style/you/2015/07/17/magazine-
summer-swim-safety-tips-ymca/30289883/)**

July 17, 2015, 9:11 a.m.