WATERFORD GRADED SCHOOL HISTORY

The History of Racine and Kenosha Counties, circa 1879, states the following: The first school (in the area) was established in 1840, of which Miss Caldwell was the teacher. She served one term. In those days of early education, no salaries were paid, it being the custom for teachers to "board out" the tuition furnished by ambitious pupils. It was not until after the State took charge of the schools in 1858 that a money consideration was offered teachers. The first school house was built in District #2 (Webster District, also known as the Rice or Grove District), about one mile west of the village of Waterford, near what is now the intersection of State Highways 20 and 83. That was first taught by Mrs. D. Newhall; she also "boarded" for her pay.

According to Stories of Waterford and it's Busy Life, circa 1923, it is not known whether the schoolhouse preceded the school, or the school the house. "A man by the name of Sherwood was among the earliest and best teachers of the district," stated Capt. Rice, "And pupils came out to the school (at Rice's Corners) from the village."

Old papers from the Chapman family home give more accurate information.

On September 22, 1845, Samuel Chapman deeded to the trustees of District No. 9, Town of Rochester, (Waterford at that time was part of the Township of Rochester), 40 feet running north and south by 30 feet east to west off the northeast corner of lot 3, block 9, Waterford, to be used as a school house site.

Another paper found by Miss Stone gives the specifications of the school house which the district proposed to build the "little red brick schoolhouse." It was to be "26 feet long, 22 feet wide, a 13 foot 6 inch panel door was to be placed in the center of the front end with transom sash over the door with 1.15 light windows on each side of the door leaving equal spaces." This describes the first schoolhouse, but not the first school. A Mrs. Jordan related a story her mother told about the first school in the village. It was held in the "Old Ark" - the old log house, the first to built in the village, which served as home to the Chapman and Barnes families. It was also the stopping place for all new comers and served as the "community center" of this new settlement. Mrs. Martha Short, a sister of Mrs. Samuel Chapman and a daughter of Levi Barnes, it is thought, was the first teacher.

An item taken from The Racine Advocate of May 1, 1844, quoted in one of the early issues of the Waterford Post, says: "The village of Waterford contains 150 inhabitants, has a good school, a good state of society, moral and religious, and now and then an abolitionist!"

A school was held in the basement of the old Congregational Church (erected in 1859) for several years. According to the reports of those who attended, it was at one time used as an overflow when "the little red brick schoolhouse," was out of commission, and again after that had been repaired, it was used as the "high school."
The "little red brick schoolhouse" was not the only home of the public school, but for years was used for public gatherings in the village. It served as the town hall, and impartially opened it's doors to the various denominations of the community for church services, too.

The time came when a new building was needed. Accordingly at the annual school meeting held September 30, 1867, an appropriation of $1000 was made for a new stone schoolhouse. Ole Heg was chairman of the meeting and James Iverson clerk.

The stone building, erected on the site of the little red brick schoolhouse) and the site of the present Graded School at Center and Main Streets) was begun the following year, and at the annual meeting that year, September 28, 1868, $1,600 was voted to complete the project.

In the summer of 1902, a large brick addition was added. This was in front of the 1869 stone building. The contract was taken by Noll & Auterman, their bid being $3,785. They in turn, sublet the mason and plaster work to Pressmen & Zerneke.

A new course of study was prepared for the school by the state superintendent. The tuition was $1.50 per month.

In 1910, Mrs. Keeler (granddaughter of Levi Barnes) visited Waterford and offered to donate $5000 to be used to build a new high school building. This offer was supplemented by Miss Imogene Chapman, (also a granddaughter of Levi Barnes) who donated campus grounds, the only condition being that it be called the "Levi Barnes Memorial". District No.1 accepted this generous offer. It was not until May, 1914, however that the district turned over to the Union Free High School, the old Congregational Church property which had been deeded to it along with the $5,000 donated by Mrs. Keeler and the $5,000 appropriated by the district for the school rebuilding funds.

The high school was erected in 1916 just north of the present high school's oldest section. Its first session was held in the fall of that year.

Waterford's state graded school was said to be the best of its class in the county.

Waterford didn't experience too many growing pains until 1948 when the lunch room was added at a cost of $85,000 to the 1869 and 1902 building. The addition of the boiler room, additional toilets and four classrooms took place in 1951. In 1955 four more classrooms and the library were built. The gymnasium, stage and two more classrooms were erected in 1959. On June 4th, 1963 a referendum was passed for the amount of $205,000 for the demolition of the original 1868 schoolhouse, and the addition of the seven classrooms fronting Main Street, a teacher's prep room, office, sick room, toilet areas and basement storage.

As of 1960 the Waterford Graded School District had rented the old agricultural school in Rochester to use as a junior high school. After the additions to the graded school in 1964 and the failure to consolidate with other schools in the Union High School District, a study was made to look at what steps to take next.
The graded school purchased a 30-acre parcel from the high school and started construction on the Fox River Middle School in February 1968. Doors opened for the students in January of 1969 and a dedication celebration was held Sunday, March 5, 1969.

Our village seemed quite peaceful for a number of years. Then in the late 1980's many people began to rediscover Waterford as a great place to live and grow.

A referendum was held Tuesday, April 3, 1990 on whether or not to borrow six million dollars to build Evergreen Elementary School, and it passed narrowly 963 yes to 934 no.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held on Friday, October 19, 1990. School children and teachers from the district, Administrators, and School Board members joined architects from PSI Design, and construction managers from Voss-Jorgensen-Schueler Co.to celebrate the occasion. After the ground was broken, a reception was held in the library of the Graded School where cake, punch and coffee were served.

Construction went smoothly and the doors of Evergreen Elementary School opened on Monday, August 26th, 1991 precisely on time and 10% under budget.

On Sunday October 20th, 1991 Evergreen's dedication ceremony was held.

April 3, 1992 was another red-letter day in the history of the Waterford Graded School District. Ground was broken for the addition and renovation of the old graded school. This building will house 4th and 5th grade and in June of 1992 the Board of Education changed its name to Maple View School. Construction proceeded on schedule and Maple View School opened on time to students on Monday, August 24th, 1992.