

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TOWN, COUNTY, AND CITY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Contrary to the belief of the average citizens in Manitowoc county and of Wisconsin, the first district schools, as organized under the legislative act of 1848, were not under the supervision of a county superintendent of schools. The legislature of 1848 created the office of town superintendent of schools. That official administered the district schools within his town until the law was repealed in 1861. No qualification standards were set up for this school official, so any voter could be and was elected to this important position. He was a town official elected at the annual town meeting for one year. His salary was one dollar per day for every day actually and necessarily devoted to the service for which he was elected.

The state legislature which created the office of town superintendent invested that official with far-reaching powers of administration and supervision. Some of them were as follows:

- (1) To divide the town into school districts and to regulate and alter their boundaries. An appeal could be made to the state superintendent from the decision of the town superintendent.
- (2) To apportion the school moneys received from the county and town treasurers to the several districts in proportion to the number of children residing in each over the age of four years and under the age of twenty years.
- (3) To transmit to the county clerk a detailed annual summary of the reports of the district clerks. The county clerk made an annual report to the state superintendent.
- (4) To examine teachers and to issue certificates authorizing the holder to teach for a period of one year, and to annul such certificates when he thought it proper.
- (5) To visit the schools in his town, examine into the state and condition of such schools, and, in his discretion, to give advice to teachers and district boards in regard to the studies to be pursued and the government of the schools.

If a person competent and willing to serve could have been secured for each town to act as superintendent of schools, the system might have been more successful, but a competent man could not be found in every town and, besides, there was not enough work to keep one man busy the entire year. As a result, the man selected considered the superintendency a side issue, devoting only as much time to his office as he thought his neighbors would stand for. He lived in such close relations to the people who elected him that he rarely exercised discretionary powers for fear that he might antagonize his neighbors. He was careful not to spend too many days away from his farm or other business attending to his duties as superintendent of schools, because that would augment the number of dollars in his salary, which in turn might endanger his re-election.

The town superintendent often disregarded decisions and requirements of the state superintendent, so that the legislature of 1859 passed an act declaring that every town superintendent who neglected or refused to carry into effect any decision or order of the state superintendent, was liable to removal from office by the town board of supervisors. But no town superintendent was ever removed from office by a town board.

The names of town superintendents serving the various towns from 1848 tot 1862 are incomplete. Those known through school records are:

Cato: D. B. Knapp, N. A. Harris, S. Bailey.
Cooperstown: J. Saeger, W. M. Christ.
Franklin: N. A. Harris, Michael Touhey, Patrick Hogan, Michael Keehan.
Liberty: Dominic Schneider, Ole Oppen.
Manitowoc: A. W. Preston.
Manitowoc Rapids: R. B. Mupon.
Maple Grove: Cornelius Lynch, John Cannon.
Newton: John Stephenson.
Others: Samuel House, H. C. Hamilton, H. H. Smith, and a Mr. Heap.

On April 6, 1861, the state school laws were amended by the passage of an act creating the office of county superintendent of schools. That official was to be elected for a two year term at the fall election on a partisan ticket. The first election was held in the fall of 1861 and the elected official took his office on January 1, 1862. The partisan election remained in effect until 1904 after which the county superintendent of schools was then elected on a non-partisan ticket at the spring election and took office

on July 1st of that year. The two year term remained in effect until 1929 when the four-year term was voted by the state legislature. At various times, since 1862, intensive agitation has been carried on to take the selection of the county superintendent out of the hands of the electors and to make the office an appointive one, but all efforts have failed up to 1948.

The act creating the office of county superintendent of schools failed to set up qualifications for that official. Prior to 1895, the county superintendent's qualification was to be a voter in the county. All except maybe one or two of the first Manitowoc county school superintendents were qualified teachers when elected. After 1895, a person aspiring to that office, was by legislative act, required to have a minimum of a county superintendent's certificate, or any form of state certificate, and a minimum of eight months' teaching experience in a Wisconsin public school. In 1929, the legislature raised the qualifications to an unlimited state certificate entitling him to teach in any public school in Wisconsin. In 1944, the qualifications were further raised to at least four years of scholastic training equivalent to a college degree.

The duties of the county superintendent of schools in 1862 were to examine and license teachers; to visit and inspect schools; to organize and conduct at least one institute for the instruction of teachers each year; to encourage teachers' associations; to introduce to the notice of teachers the best modes of instruction; and to give to district boards the most approved plans of building and ventilating schoolhouses; to report, from time to time, the condition of the schools under his supervision; to receive from the town, city, and village clerks abstracts of the reports of the several district clerks and to transmit the same, with such other information as he might deem advisable or as might be required of him, to the state superintendent; and to perform such other duties as were required by law, or by the state superintendent of public instruction. The present duties and responsibilities are so manifold that only a statute book can do justice to importance of this county school official.

The following people served as county superintendent of schools since the county superintendency law went into effect on January 1, 1862:

R. J. Valkenburg-----	1861-1862
C. S. Canright-----	1862-1863
J. W. Thombs-----	1863-1864
J. A. Crowley-----	1864-1869
Michael Kirwan-----	1869-1875
W. A. Walker-----	1875-1879
C. F. Viebahn-----	1879-1880
John Nagle-----	1880-1891
C. E. Patzer-----	1891-1895
A. W. Dassler-----	1895-1897
E. R. Smith-----	1897-1899
F. C. Christiansen-----	1899-1904
W. E. Larson-----	1904-1909
C. W. Meisnest-----	1909-1917
J. W. Voboril-----	1917-1920
Lillian L. Chloupek-----	1920-1926
E. S. Mueller-----	1926-1945
Jos. J. Rappel-----	1945-

All of the schools within Manitowoc county remained under the jurisdiction of the county superintendent of schools until city school systems were established. The first city to set up its own school system was Two Rivers in 1905 when S. E. Pearson was appointed city superintendent of schools and high school principal. City Superintendents have never been elected by the direct vote of the people, but have been appointed by the city school board. These appointed officials were selected on the basis of their teaching qualifications and leadership in the profession. Their term is usually for three year periods and their salaries far above that paid the elected county superintendent. The Two Rivers city superintendents from 1905 to 1948 were: S. E. Pearson, W. J. Hamilton, W. T. Darling, F. G. Bishop, and Geo. M. O'Brien. Manitowoc city, adopting the city school system in 1910, has had P. J. Zimmers, Elmer Waite, Hugh Bonar, and Lee H. Lamb as city superintendents up to 1948. Kiel set up its own city school system in 1947 with Russell S. Way as its first city superintendent.