

## EARLY HISTORY OF PINE CITY SCHOOLS

### THE LITTLE WHITE SCHOOLHOUSE

Sometime during the mid-1870s a white frame building was constructed on the corner of what is now Main Street and Fourth Avenue. This was Pine City's first schoolhouse. The building was topped by a cupola, the bell tower. Composed of two rooms, the little south wing was used for the younger children, up to the fifth grade. The larger grammar room was for the older pupils including a few high school students. The primary students were not classified in grades as they are now, but were promoted by advancing in their Readers. As was the custom in those days, the school doubled as one of the social centers of Pine City, hosting spelling bees, song fests and many other activities. The building was also used for church services as well as Sunday School. In his autobiography Julius Dosey's son, Ernest, states: "We used to play anteyover on the Presbyterian Church during recess. Our teacher was a Miss Judd who lived on the Old Government Road. The kids of the school were mostly German, Irish, Swede with a few Yankees mixed in."



The First School House and the Pine County Courthouse

The first principal was Colonel John F. Stone. He was the husband of Sandy McKusick's great aunt Emily and the proprietor of the Pioneer Boarding House which was located on Third Avenue and Third Street S.E. and which burned to the ground in December, 1904. Jenny King was one of the first teachers in the primary room followed by Mrs. L.E.. Breckenridge and Susan Shearer.

Some of the students in those years were (Judge) Robert Wilcox , Mike Hurley, Lil and Bess Lambert, Louise Engler and several Glasow children. Later on, during the 1880s, the principal was Howard Hay.



COL. J. F. STONE.

During the early 1890s Mrs. James Hurley taught in the school. At that time the school became very crowded so a schoolroom was opened in what later became the Pine City Hardware building. In 1894 there were 225 students. The superintendent was Mr. J.H. Day and among the officers of the school board were George Kick, Albert Pennington and James Hurley.

After the building had served its purpose as a schoolhouse it was used as Pine City's village hall. This was where the citizens of that time gathered to vote in the local, state and national elections. Finally in 1938 the people of Pine City voted to construct a new village hall on the site of the old school, next to the wooden court house which burned in 1939 as many of us remember. The old frame building was sawed in half in order to move it to its new location at the fair grounds. The city electric and telephone lines were cut as the building made its way north on Highway 61. The cupola was removed in order to clear the wires. A Forest Lake house mover and Al Blomberg were in charge of the move. Unfortunately the building deteriorated and finally was torn down.

## THE WEBSTER SCHOOL

In 1894 a four room school was built on Main Street, two blocks south of the first school, at a cost of \$10,000, and the old wooden schoolhouse was abandoned. After a few years, even the new Webster School was too small and the first grade was moved to the larger room of the old white frame school. Soon the other smaller room was also put to use as a classroom. In 1899 Report Books were sent home to the parents; a fine of two cents was levied if the books were lost or marred. A pupil who was absent without an excuse could be suspended. Students were graded on deportment, attendance, and punctuality as well as scholarship. Ranked # 1 in Grade 9 was Mayme Pennington, followed by Ellen Swedenburg in Grade 8, John Axtell and Josie Buselmeier in Grade 7. J.C. Holland was the superintendent at that time. In the fall of 1900 it was announced that Pine City was to have a state high school. The complete four year's course was outlined, and at the end of the year, if the school met the state standards, the school was entitled to the \$800 given to each high school in the state which met these requirements. This was the first high school in all of Pine County. A complete set of rules for the establishment of the school was published in the paper. These included the use of the building, recess, complaints about teachers, text books, duties of the superintendent and extensive rules for the teachers and janitors.



PUBLIC SCHOOL.  
Photo by W. E. Poole.

On May 12, 1903 the taxpayers of Pine City voted bonds to the amount of \$9000 for improvements to the existing Webster School. Wings, 30 x 50 feet and two stories high, were added with two rooms on each floor, making eight rooms in all. The additions were built of Menomonee red pressed brick as was the existing structure. The interior was remodeled and a new heating plant and ventilating system were put in at that time. In September of that year Supt. Chamberlain asked that the seventh and eighth grades and the high school students meet at the Methodist Church, the fifth and sixth grades in the Connor store building, the fourth grade in the G.A.R.. Hall, the third grade in the Presbyterian Church and the first and second grades meet in their usual place, the old wooden school house. The dedication of the new Webster School took place on November 6 in the assembly room of the new building. School board president, Douglas Greely, Rev. Ferguson, R.C. Saunders, Prof. R. H. Blankenship and Supt. of Public Instruction J.W. Olson all addressed the large audience. There were also several groups and soloists who provided musical entertainment.

In 1903 six students graduated from the "Pioneer" class of the high school. On May 15th the senior class gave a "Dickens Party" and basket social in the Miller store room. The program included solos by Hattie Pennington and Bess Lambert, music by the Parlor Orchestra, a recitation by Miss McKusick and several tableaux followed by the sale of the baskets. Commencement Exercises were held at Rath's Hall on June 1, 1903. A new piano was sent to the hall for the school. After a period of eight or ten days and after being tested during that period of time, it would be either returned if not satisfactory or retained by the school. It was paid for by the school entertainment during the following year. Jessamine Allen played a piano solo during the commencement. Mayme Pennington was the valedictorian, Ben Hurley the salutatorian. The class history was presented by Anna Voss, Jessamine Allen gave the class prophecy and Marie Kibler and Martin Hurley presented orations. A few days before the commencement Mrs. James Hurley gave a reception in honor of the class. The program at the party was presented by the Misses Allen, Pennington, Lambert, Hurley and Mr. Olsen, after which the time was passed by "A Search Among the Ages". The house was decorated with pine, spruce and cut flowers. At 11:30 a supper was served followed by the telling of ghost stories.

The Pioneer Class  
of the  
Pine City High School  
requests the pleasure of your  
presence at the  
First Annual Commencement  
Exercises  
to be held at the Opera House  
June first, nineteen hundred  
and three  
at eight o'clock

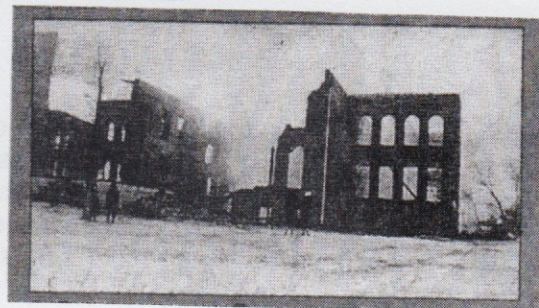
#### Graduates

MAY PENNINGTON  
JAMES T. HURLEY  
MARTIN J. HURLEY  
ANNA M. VOSS  
MARIE M. KIBLER  
JESSAMINE E. ALLEN

Prof. A.B. Hartley, a graduate of Grinnell College, was hired as superintendent for the year 1905. The other faculty members included Louisa Brackett, Miss Barnum, Miss Day, Miss Constantine and Miss Simmons. Three students graduated in June, 1905: Emmiline Axtell, Hattie Pennington and Lillian Perkins and J. Adam Bede delivered the main address "Dwelling largely upon the value of educational and practical knowledge". Music was furnished by the Pine City Band under the direction of Mr. Claggett. Bess Lambert "favored the audience by singing that beautiful and soul inspiring song 'Asthore'"

## THE FIRE

At 3:10 Friday morning, January 2, 1939 the fire whistle blew for fifteen minutes. The rear of Webster School was a mass of flames. The hydrant on Henry Buirge's corner was frozen so the hoses were attached at the nearby hydrants. Despite the efforts of the fire department, the building was a total loss. The building and contents were insured but many teachers and students lost personal items. (Ed. note: I lost my Parker pen.) The flames could be seen for many miles and debris from the fire was found on the east side of Cross Lake. By January 12 plans were in progress for the building of a new elementary school which would have six classrooms on the main floor; four classrooms and one large room were located on the second floor. . Industrial Arts, Home Ec. and Ag. would be on the second floor.



## PINE CITY HIGH SCHOOL

The 1914 Pine City High School, designed by Kelly and Williams of Duluth, was erected at a cost of \$25,000. Featuring a gymnasium with showers, manual training room and an agricultural work room in the basement, first floor office and class rooms, the building was "one of the finest in the state." Up half a flight from the first floor was the assembly room which seated 110 pupils. Up another half flight were the chemistry and physics labs, and the domestic science rooms.



Before The fire



Frank Gordon Jones

Supt. Frank Jones of Chippewa Falls, WI was hired in January, 1925 to complete the unexpired term of T.D. Brown. He had been teaching for twelve years and had been superintendent of a number of towns in Wisconsin, including St. Croix Falls. In August of 1927 Fred P. McKusick, a former University of Minnesota student, was instrumental in getting a football program started in the high school. As soon as a number of nearby towns had teams the season could begin.



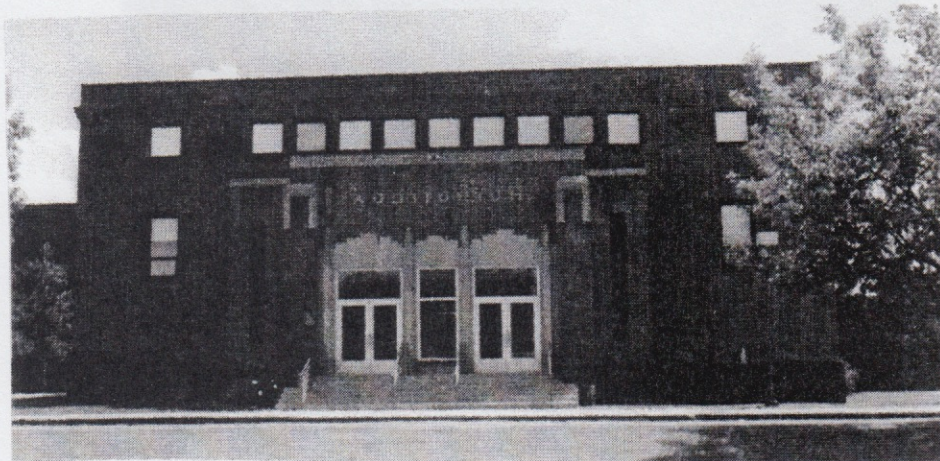
After The Fire

## THE AUDITORIUM

The next building project was an addition to the high school begun in October, 1935. The construction was approved as a PWA project and a federal grant of \$34,650 was made. The bond issue for \$40,000 was passed and construction began. There were to be two additions, a new section added on the north of the high school and a new auditorium. The first floor of the addition contained four classrooms and a teachers' room. A laboratory, a lab lecture room and the library were on the second floor and in the basement a music room and a lunch room were built. Also, for the first time the school provided lockers with locks.

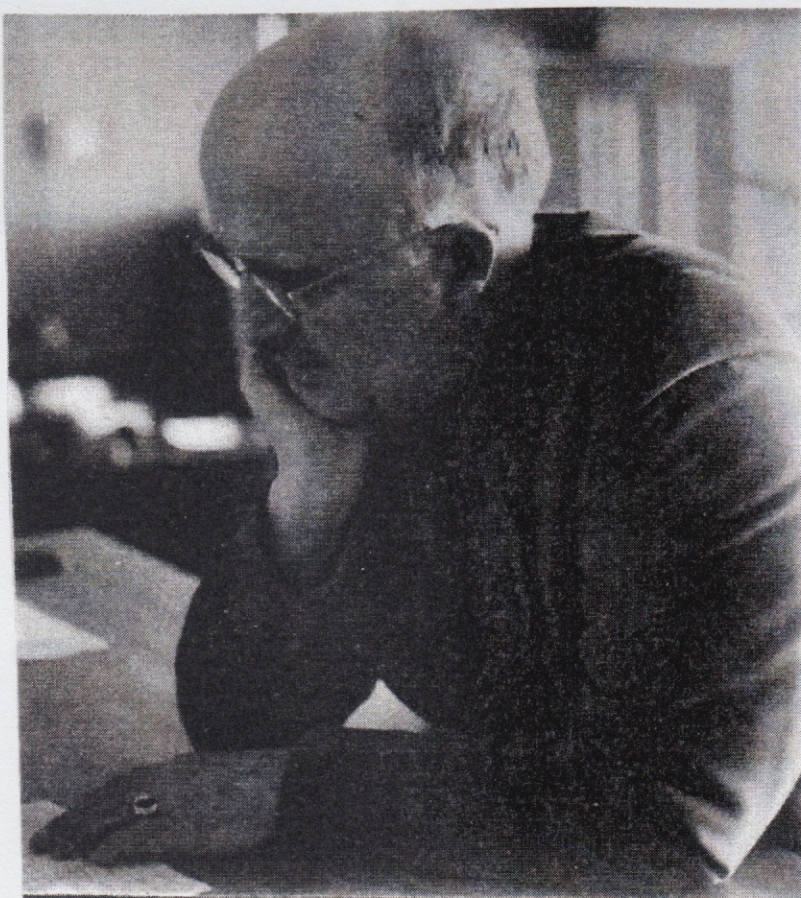
Unfortunately the costs exceeded the estimate and it was necessary to get a supplemental grant. Two members of the school board, Dewey Wilcox and Dr. A.K. Stratte, drove to Washington D.C. to state their case before the PWA officials. Final approval was given by Pres. Franklin Roosevelt.

The two buildings were completed and put to use in February, 1937. The auditorium featured 725 seats on the main floor and in the overhanging balcony. The building, constructed of brick and tile, was entirely fireproof except for the hardwood floor over a concrete base. Under the stage were locker rooms, showers, a handball court and an entrance to the orchestra pit.



## MR. ZIEBARTH

Most of us remember Mr. Ziebarth. He was the superintendent who was so economical that he turned out the auditorium lights just as the last ball was swooshing through the basket. In April of 1932, out of 110 applications, Victor Waldorf Ziebarth was elected superintendent of the Pine City Schools at a salary of \$2000 a year, which was \$4000 less than the previous superintendent's (Frank Jones) salary. As a graduate of North High, Macalester College and with a masters degree from the University of Minnesota he remained with us until 1965 except from Oct. 1942 until July 1944 when he served with the U.S. Marines during World War II. At the special reception dinner honoring him in January 1966, it was pointed out that 2188 seniors had graduated under his supervision. He died on March 21, 1968 at the age of 67 years.



*The Pine Poler*

*Compiled and edited by M.L.S.*

THE EARLY SCHOOL HISTORY WAS SPONSORED BY THE FOLLOWING  
BUSINESSES:



**Pine City High School**

August 9, 2003

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*Pine County and its Memories* by Jim Cordes

*The History of Pine City* by James W. Clark

*Autobiography* by Ernest Dosey

*1929 Chengwatana*

*The Pine Poker*

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The Family Theater Home of Quality Pictures	Hotel Agnes Barber Shop John Kyncl, prop.	Dr. James Slaven Dentist
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The Gray Studio Somebody Wants Your Photo	Drs. Stratte and Stratte A.K. Stratte, M.D. H.C. Stratte, M.D.	W.A. Sauser Hardware and Machinery
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Pine City Motor Co. Lincoln Ford Fordson	Petschel's Cafe Don't Divorce Your Wife Because She Can't Cook	L.A. Chmelik Attorney
Borcher's Shoe Store Home of Good Footwear	Gehl Oil Company	Ottocar Sobotka Attorney-at-Law
First National Bank Ready To Do Our Part	Albert Oman Plumbing & Heating	Farmers & Merchants State Bank We Strive for Satisfaction
Parrish-Boo Lumber Co. Nationally Advertised Products	Milgrom's Clothing Store Exclusive Haberdashery	Rybak's Store Brooms
Pine City Bakery Cakes, Pies, Bread & Rolls	Nutting's Bakery Try Us	Hotel Agnes Dining Room Regular Meals 50 cents
Holetz Bros. Plymouth Autos	Pine City Bowling Alley J. M. Collins, Prop.	Glaede Meat Market Fresh Meats & Fish
Pine City Bottling Works A. Nelson, Prop.	Challeen's Store Fresh Meat and Produce	Madden's Seed & Feed Store Ours is the Trade that Service Made