

Hemlock High School Building Destroyed by Fire Yesterday

Unknown Author - The Livonia Gazette

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The Hemlock High School in 1914.

Early Morning Blaze

Structure Erected in 1911-12

Discovered by Mrs. Harvey Dunn at 2:30 a.m.

Cause Unknown

Many Fire Companies Responded

Nothing Saved Except School Records

Last \$1000 of Indebtedness Due Next Month

Insurance of \$29,000

Hemlock's beautiful stucco high school building, erected sixteen years ago, was completely destroyed by fire early Thursday morning. The blaze was discovered in the northeast end of the basement by Mrs. Harvey Dunn, who lives directly north of the building, about 2:30 a.m., and two hours and a half later nothing remained but the north wall, two of the three heating columns and a smouldering mass of ruins.

Hemlock's fire company responded immediately on the sound of the alarm, but it was seen that the fire could not be held in check without assistance. Men and apparatus responded from Livonia, Lakeville, Lima and Honeoye Falls. Four lines of hose were laid to the creek, some 300 feet to the north, and streams of water poured constantly on the building. Due to this and to the fact that the north wall was kept up, the residence of Harvey Dunn was not damaged. The wall was pulled over later after the fire had subsided. The big elm in the school yard, which draws the admiration of every one who sees it, was not materially harmed.

What started the blaze is solely a matter of conjecture. Although men had been painting and cleaning the building, it is not thought that the fire had any connection with this fact, as none of them smoked or had used matches and they had not even had a fire to heat the water they used for cleaning. The blaze started in the boiler room. The school records were the only things saved from the building, this being accomplished by Hugh Drain. The front of the building was not opened, to avoid creating a draft, so Drain went up a ladder and into the principal's office through a window. He came out for air several times, because the room was dense with smoke, but finally managed to get hold of the records. One of his hands was cut, but not seriously.

Firends carried all of the furniture from the residence of H. M. Dunn, fearing that this building could not be saved. By skillful and rapid work, however, the spread of the fire was prevented, and all of the furnishings which had been removed were carried back into the house. The big tree between the school building and the Dunn residence furnished a large amount of protection to the house.

The building was erected in 1911-12 and was opened for use April 15, 1912. John Nickerson of Livonia did the excavating, built the wall and handled the plastering and stuccoing, while John Bearss of Livonia had the contract for the carpenter work. The dimensions of the building were 64 x 87 feet. There were three recitation rooms on each of the two floors, besides the basement and attic rooms which could have been converted into recitation rooms. There was a library, which was unusually complete. In it were many volumes presented by the late William McLeod.

The original expense of the building, equipped, was between \$20,000 and \$25,000, but a similar building today would cost over twice as much, it is estimated. Fifteen-year bonds were issued, the last of which, of \$1,000 denomination, is payable the 1st of next month. E. H. Westbrook was president of the board of education when the building was constructed, and the other members were George Knapp, V. P. Owen, George Rix and Charles LaMont. The insurance carried at the time of the fire was \$29,000.

The present members of the board of education are C. W. Hanna, president, George Knapp, Olin Mather, Floyd Beam and Frank Connor. The faculty consists of six teachers, including the principal, and the registration of pupils is roughly 125.

What action will be taken to meet the educational needs of the district has not yet been determined. Late last night the two heating columns were still standing and the ruins were blazing in many places. Following is a description of the building as taken from the Gazette file of April 5, 1912:

The new school building soon to be occupied by the union school is in every respect one of the best of modern school structures. When inspecting this building recently, the district superintendent, Mr. Jay F. Smith of Dansville, said: "It is the best union school in Livingston county, if not the state." The state inspector, Eugene Lytle of Albany, voiced the same opinion when he saw the building a few weeks ago.

The exceptionally convenient arrangement of the rooms, the splendid heating and ventilation equipment and the artistic beauty of the building are due to Architect Horace T. Hatton of Rochester; and no better materials could have been furnished under the contract than have been put into the building by John Bearss and John Nickerson of Livonia, who hold the building contracts.

The location of the building on high ground near the center of the village makes it stand out as a landmark for miles around. The school fronts on Main street and its entrance is shaded by the beautiful giant elm under which was formerly located the old Reynolds homestead.

As one approaches the building from the direction of the post office he will notice the main part of the structure parallel to the street, with a large rear wing extending toward the east. On each side of this wing at its juncture with the main structure are two side entrances. These, with the front main entrance, afford ample exits for the school. The outside will be finished in gray cement stucco on steel lath.

The situation of the rooms and hall on the second floor is the same as that on the first floor. There are, however, some changes in detail. Over the short main entrance hall of the first floor there is located on the second floor the principal's office and the teachers' room; and the east room on this floor is made larger by dispensing with the cloak rooms which adjoin the lower east room. This upper room is designed for the assembly room of the school, and is 28 x 40 feet, with eight windows arranged in three sides. The height of all rooms is twelve feet.

The interior woodwork is all of chestnut, stained light and varnished, with the exception of the floors and stair treads, which are of hard Georgia pine. The large basement affords ample space for two play rooms, two toilet rooms and the heating plant. This plant combines the heating and ventilation systems by conducting pure heated air to each room in the quantity required by law, and conducting away the impure air.

It is expected that the building will be ready for use the present month. At that time the Block school, the Glendale school and the high school now held in the I. O. O. F. building will be united in the new building, which could easily accommodate a far greater number of pupils. This fine new school, affording increased educational opportunities, ought to be a great stimulus to the people of the Hemlock district to take greater interest and pride in their village and all its institutions that tend for the betterment of the community.

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