

*[Editor's Note: During the 1877-1878 school year, students from Rockville High School published a monthly magazine. Among the articles written by the students was a history of education in Rockville. An important source for the article was William T. Cogswell who had published his "History of Rockville" five years before. The information presented here goes into greater depth on the process of finances, land acquisition and school structure than Cogswell did in his memoir. The first and second articles in the four part series also outline his contributions to the planning and construction of Rockville's first schoolhouse. - JL]*



## The R. H. S.

November 10, 1877

### Rockville's School History

In this and the following number, we give a sketch of our schools, beginning as far back as memory and records will go, and bringing it down to the present. Our chief sources of information are the book of Records kept by the district clerk, and the author of the History of Rockville, published in 1872. As the records do not begin until 1836, we rely for previous history, wholly on the latter source.

The close family connections among the early property owners led them to secure better educational advantages than is usual in factory towns. There was a school house in the western part of the village, where Wendhiser's furniture shop was burned, not long ago. Up to 1828 the children went to school there. The building was afterward, oddly enough, used as a soap manufactory! In '28 a house was built for Mr. George Kellogg where Mr. Maxwell's now stands. In the parlor of this a school was started. It was kept in private house wherever there was room until 1834. This year a school was kept in the old Martin house which then stood where Judge Loomis's now is. In 1833 there was a school in the chambers of the building now at the corner of School and Park streets. This was the first store. It then stood near the place now occupied by S. W. Johnson's shop. Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1836 a meeting of legal voters of the "Rock School district" was held at the office of the

Rock Company, Willard Fuller, chairman. Three persons were “appointed with the school to procure a room for the school.” It was voted “that school be kept four months the ensuing season”, and that “warnings for school meetings shall be put on the door of the store now occupied by J. F. Judd & Co.” Lucius Hinckley was chosen to “procure a subscription of defraying the expenses of room, wood, store, etc.” The next year it was noted “that a school shall be kept three months and longer unless there shall be objection on the part of any members.” Each person was assessed in proportion to the numbers of scholars he sent. In 1838 a meeting was held which decided that a “school commence as soon as a teacher can be procured.” In 1839 the lower school in the old building was maintained and at the same time a higher grade established. This was afterward transferred to the building where Dr. Wilson’s store now stands. It was called the lecture room, but was fitted up with desks and seats. In 1841 persons living out of the District were permitted to send to the school by paying their proportion of the expense. In 1842 a committee was appointed to procure teachers for the ensuing year, and in the following year it was voted that “one-third of the publick money be appropriated for the summer school.” The appropriation was continued in 1844. The school room was repaired, the expense being met by subscriptions. In 1848 we find “two district schools” as an established fact. As we have said the mill owners were connected among themselves, but this did not wholly prevent difference of opinion. In order to reach the history of the present high school building, we must refer to some other matters. When the first tavern was built, its proprietors were given a piece of land extending from Main to Prospect street, bounded on the west by Park street. As soon as it was completed a natural question arose as to whether cider should be sold or not. One of the owners was a farmer, and had cider. Although there was a law against selling “spirit”, the nature of cider was so substantial that it was thought quite proper to supply an occasional glass to way-worn travelers. Mr. George Kellogg however was afraid of cider, and when the deed of the land was drawn, he provided that if any ale, beer or other intoxicating liquors were manufactured or vended on the premises, it should work a forfeiture of the deed. With these provisions the owners of the tavern were unwilling to comply. So matters went on until 1836, when times were good and dividends large.

December 17, 1877

When Mr. Kellogg left the Rock, one of the tavern-owners became their agent for the transfer of lands. He bought out the tavern premises. The old building was moved back and a new one put in its place the coming year. In 1849, a vote was taken on the question, “Whether we will do anything on the present season towards building a new school house. P. Talcott, Wm T. Cogswell, and A. C. Crosby were made a committee to “see what can be done towards procuring a site for a school house, and also ascertain the expense and report at a future meeting.” One week later, April 21, the report of said committee was made and accepted. A committee of five was then chosen to investigate the subject further and report at next meeting. These were Messrs. Cogswell and Talcott of the former board, together with J. N. Stickney, S. P. Rose and A. Hammond. May 1<sup>st</sup>, it was “Unanimously voted that the meeting is in favor of a lot on the Tavern Co.s’ land,” and the committee appointed to select a site was “appointed to negotiate for a lot from the Tavern Co.” May 11<sup>th</sup> the committee reported that they had contracted for a lot and A. Hammond, Wm T. Cogswell and C. Burdick were appointed to “make out a plan and

estimate of expenses for the building.” May 18<sup>th</sup> the plan was accepted. It was voted “that the District will proceed to erect a suitable house for the District.” A building committee was appointed- Messrs. Cogswell, Hammond, and Stickney. Voted that the building committee report a plan of a school house of the size and general character of the one they have seen in Springfield.” May 25<sup>th</sup>, the report was made and accepted. Of course in a community where each man felt himself on a footing of equality with the rest, and where opinions were strong, there were occasional difficulties in the way of business. No progress could be made until a clear title to the site could be obtained. The committee were careful and persistent so that, with a word here and a song there, the matter was brought to a satisfactory settlement. The building committee were directed to build in accordance with their report. It was voted that they be authorized to borrow money to complete the schoolhouse and give their notes for the same. Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> it was voted “to raise the sum of 13 cents on a dollar on the list of 1848 for the purpose of defraying, in part, the expense of building the school house now being completed.” “That schools be established in the usual places until the new house shall be ready.” “That the building committee put a bell on the new house.” Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1850, a meeting of citizens was held in this new building.

[The rest of the series reviews the rules for teachers and students, how improvements to the building were financed, the hiring policies for teachers, and how a high school was established on the upper floor in 1874. The final paragraph of the series reflects the benefits of public education at that time and does not differ too much from the goals for public education in our town today.]

The schools are now in complete running order. It remains for the citizens who send children, or who own property in Vernon, to see that they are cordially supported. One of the first inducements for the better classes to settle among us is a good system of public schools. We need only read advertisements of real estate to see the prominence given by business men to this point. Let our schools be kept in their past and present condition, only growing with the demands of the time, and our business and social prosperity will be likely to continue.