

School Burned Down Week Before Opening

DESTROYED BY FIRE 50 YEARS AGO



IN 1884 THIS SCHOOL BUILDING WAS OPENED. IT BURNED DOWN
THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 3, 1896

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There are a few boys and girls-not many we are sure – who watch the approach of the day when school is to reopen with a silent and sometimes expressed “I wish the old school would burn down before school opens again.”

There is no record of whether or not any Riverside boys and girls made sure a wish fifty years ago, but the fact that the school

did burn down just a week before it was schedule to reopen in the fall.

Mrs. Lewis T. Marks, who was born in Riverside and resided here until a few years ago and who was a visitor here for a month this summer, reminded The News editor that it was fifty years ago this August that the brick school building, pictured above, burned down.

But the story she tells should discourage boys and girls from getting up their hopes at this time. Despite the lack of a building, classes were held anyway. The, then new, town hall was used for some of the classrooms, and the kindergarten met in the Arcade building.

That old school stood on the site of the present Central school building, the first units of which were erected shortly after the fire.

The News had intended to feature the school fire as a Fiftieth Anniversary event, but this week there was some opposition to Mrs. Marks' date of the fire having occurred in 1896.

Fred C. Crowe of Forest Avenue is not sure about the year date, but he recollects being at a republican rally for presidential candidate when the school fire alarm was sounded.

"Louis Rugg, who had been visiting a young lady friend in the neighborhood of the school first saw the fire. He came running to the town hall yelling, 'The

school's on fire,' and soon everyone in the hall was rushing down the street," Mr. Crowe recalls.

"We only had two reels of hose and the hook and ladder at that time. The hose was just long enough to reach from a hydrant on Longcommon Road to the rear of the school where the blaze had started. It wasn't much of a fire to begin with but we couldn't get the water and soon the fire spread over the entire building.

"A call was sent to Clyde for their apparatus, and a squad came out from the Millard Avenue department to help, but the school building could not be saved." Mr. Crowe related this week as he recalled some of the details.

"The fire must have been before 1896, for that was the year when the department got the horse drawn equipment, and we didn't have that when the school burned. Also, that is the year I joined the department and I wasn't a member

