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The School Bell Rings In Yankton

Yankton Was At
The Forefront Of
Education In
Dakota Territory

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
The Press & Dakotan

Paving the way for success in every aspect of Yankton's history is the strong tradition of highly-acclaimed schools.

From having the first high school in Dakota Territory to having one of the longest continuous parochial schools in the area, Yankton has always put a high value on providing a strong education for its youth, and, in many situations, paved the way by being the first school district to provide opportunities for its students in the state.

As early as 1866 Yankton built its first school, Brown School, at Walnut and Fourth Street where the Post Office stands today. Yankton's pioneers didn't put much effort into naming the school. It was known as "Brown School" because its first coat of paint was brown. Prior to that time schools were private and often held in the homes of the teachers.

Frontier Academy or "White School" and the Yankton Academy were started by Joseph Ward, who would later start Yankton College. Yankton Academy became Yankton High School in 1875.

In 1875, there were 19 students enrolled at the high school and 289 students total in the district. Today, the Yankton School District operates on a more than \$26 million annual budget educating 2,700 students each school year.

Just as important to the community was the establishment of Sacred Heart School in 1884 for grades 1-6. The first school building was a 26x50 two-story structure where current Sacred Heart Church stands. In 1907 the school added seventh and eighth grade to the curriculum, with the first eighth grade graduating class in 1909. It wasn't until 1982 that the school added a kindergarten program. The current enrollment of nearly 400 students from 225 families, is the highest in the school's history since the 1960s.

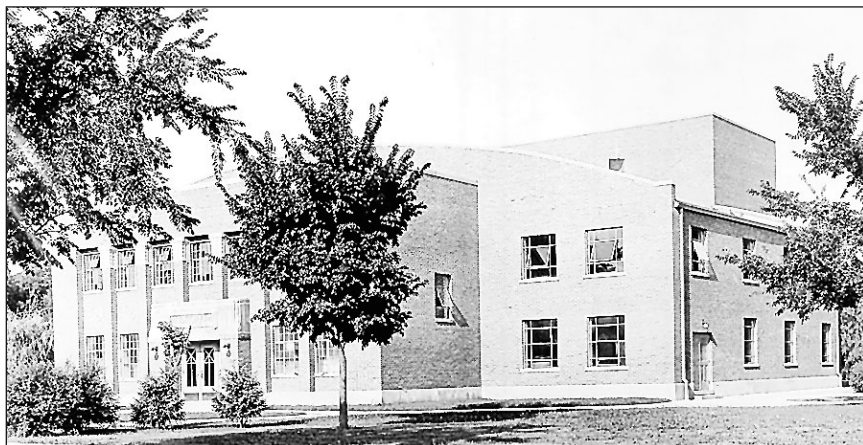
THE ROLE OF ACTIVITIES

Both Sacred Heart Schools and the Yankton Public Schools have a history of creating leaders out of their students. From being the first accredited school in South Dakota, to being two of the most successful schools in academic, athletic and fine arts competitions across the state and country, Yankton can be proud of the traditions established in the community's schools.

- A few highlights include:
- the first state championship in school history was won in 1900 by the football team;
 - track records go back as far as 1902;
 - debate began in 1903;
 - the YHS *Woksape* was started in 1903;
 - girls basketball began in 1906 only to be disbanded in 1912 and was not reestablished until the 1970s, at which point they were dominant in the state;
 - orchestra began in 1917;
 - the Yankton Booster Club has been



Yankton Academy was one of the forerunners to the current public school system in Yankton. It became Yankton High School in 1875, with 19 students in high school and 289 total students. Now the Yankton School District educates more than 2,700 students a year.



The old Yankton High School Auditorium, which housed the school's indoor sporting events until the school at 2000 Mulberry Street was built. The facility remained the home for Yankton Middle School activities until 1997.

around since 1923;

- the first YHS band concert was held March 15, 1932, and the first SHS band concert was held May 23, 1939.

These "firsts" don't begin to cover the amazing history and longevity of success at the schools. More impressive, all are activities that are still participated in today.

FACILITIES THROUGH THE YEARS

The first building specifically built as a public high school building, was built for a cost of \$21,172 in 1887. Called Central School, this building was located on Douglas Avenue. In 1916, a new high school was built at Walnut and Seventh. This facility would be used by the dis-

trict as the high school until 1958 and as the middle school until January 1997. In 1958, the district built a new facility at 2000 Mulberry, which would be home to the high school until the 1996-1997 school year when the current high school facility, located on Summit Street, was opened. The Mulberry facility was transitioned into the current middle school at that time.

Throughout the years, there were many different public elementary facilities. Some that are no longer in existence are White, Garfield and Grove Elementary, in addition to more than 25 country schools.



In 1915, Yankton voters approved a \$100,000 bond issue for a new high school to replace the old Central School, depicted above. It was the first time women were allowed to vote in a Yankton election. The old Central School was considered by many to be substandard and ill-prepared to serve the city's growing school numbers. The old school was located on Walnut St. (From the book "Yankton: The Way It Was!" by Bob Karolevitz)

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