

HISTORY OF
THE PARENTS COUNCIL
of
THE LATIN SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO



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In the early days of the 1880's when the first Latin-to-be-parents were worrying about setting up a school for their children, other subjects must have alarmed and distracted them too, for example the assassination of President James A. Garfield and maybe of Czar Alexander II. They read the "Memoirs" of the bankrupt and dying General U. S. Grant. In the Sudan Gen. Gordon had been killed but the tide of battle was turned by Gen. Kitchener. Chicago saw the Haymarket Riots, Baltimore had the first city electric railway, Geronimo, the Apache, surrendered and Sherlock Holmes appeared on the troubled scene.

Nature was severe. Floods were followed by more floods; fires and blizzards marked the period. At Mayerling the Austrian Crown Prince was slain and in Brazil the last emperor on American soil was forced off his throne, Though the Sino-Japanese War, the 1899 Boer War and the Boxer Revolt were far away, the Cuban Revolution was not and our own Spanish-American War was looming. The Pullman strike was in progress and Dreyfus was on trial.

But on the credit side Edison presented the kinetoscope, Roentgen the x-ray, Marconi the wireless and the Curies radium. Other innovations were provided by Eugene Debs and Carrie Nation.

With the digging of the Panama Canal, Dr. Walter Reed redoubled his efforts to wipe out yellow fever. It was about time for President McKinley to be shot and the Wright Brothers to make history at Kitty Hawk. Then the Russo-Japanese war began, New York got a subway, San Francisco an earthquake and 602 died in the Iroquois Theater.

Was there ever a period when parents are not distracted from family hopes and plans by world-shaking events!

Background

Not only is the chronology of the Latin School of interest to alumni and students but the various steps in locating the schools in the early days reflect a responsible parent body with an intense interest in their community and a sincere and dedicated faculty. Students who have enjoyed this teaching and training have achieved standards above the levels of conformity. Their early constructive and critical thinking has not only strengthened their work in college but without doubt has contributed to their success as Chicagoans.

Cleveland was President, one John A. Roche replaced Carter Harrison as Mayor, and the schools of the United States, young and struggling, were healthy and hopeful. Primary schools, both public and private, were springing up everywhere, in small towns and even at crossroads. A state provision called for one grade school to every square mile of populated countryside. Secondary schools were following suit. As the population grew the cities depended upon public funds and taxes. Many private ones in the East followed the European notions of teaching. Private money for graduate study was harder to come by and the few universities that got under way then had either the individual states to thank for their support or one of the churches or religious orders. Among the early leaders in this form of altruism were Carnegie and Rockefeller.

The Latin School is the descendant of two private schools started in 1888 and 1896. The first of these began with ten boys whose parents had brought Miss Mabel Vickery from Massachusetts to teach their sons in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Elephalst Batchford at 375 LaSalle Street. Two years later they moved to the residence of General and Mrs. A. C. McClurg at 1444 Lake Shore Drive.

As this enterprise flourished Mrs. Cyrus M. McCormick and Mrs. Emmons Blaine in 1896 invited Miss Vickery to start another school for younger children in the home of a parent. By 1899 the two schools were combined by Miss Vickery and her coadjutor, Mr. Robert Bates, becoming the first Chicago Latin School which opened its doors at 18-20 East Division Street.

It was decided by 1902 that classes for the girls in Grades 8-12 should be held separately, and for eleven years they were, at 54 East Scott Street. In 1913 the girls' section became the Chicago Latin School for Girls with its own building erected in 1912 at 59 East Scott Street. On Miss Vickery's retirement in 1929, a group of parents bought the school and incorporated it not-for-profit as the Girls Latin School of Chicago with Miss Eliabeth Singleton of Maine as Headmistress. She remained until 1945 when Miss Annie Allen from New York took over.

After 1913 the original Chicago Latin School had continued as a boys' school with Mr. Bates as Headmaster. His retirement in 1926 presented the question of how and where its functions might best be carried on. This was answered by incorporating the school and erecting for it a new building at 1531 North Dearborn Parkway. Mr. George Northrop held the position of headmaster until his retirement in 1933 when he was followed by Mr. James O. Wood. Both were New Englanders.

One School

The consolidation of the two schools in 1953 was the logical result of the growth of the Near North Chicago community, the tendency to send boys East to the preparatory schools of their parents and the increased costs of maintaining the high faculty standards required for two Latin high schools. The resulting single high school enjoyed a great many advantages and also made available considerable space for the rapidly expanding primary school. The Dearborn building was occupied by the Lower School (Kindergarten-Grade 6) and the Scott Street building by the Upper School (Grades 7-12). Dr. Mark Neville became the first headmaster of the Latin School of Chicago, remaining at the helm until 1960 when Mr. John MacD. Graham took charge.

The next nine years saw enormous growth and progress, and the school that welcomed Dr. Edwin Van Gorder in its new building at 59 W. North Blvd. was an institution of distinction and high regard in the Chicago community with some 500 families, 700 students and a backlog of 2000 devoted and grateful alumni. Designed by Harry Weese and Associates, the handsome new school at North and Clark Streets offers scholastic comfort and style and every structural asset in the educational repertoire. And all this is combined with a location across the street from the SW corner of Lincoln Park and all transportation advantages. Its neighbors, besides a bank and shopping center, include the Chicago Historical Society, the Academy of Sciences and the Zoo.

As was quite apparent from the beginning, the parents were always very close to their children and to the school. Their enthusiasm for attending all the school affairs and class meetings naturally grew until each class had a Mother and an assistant Mother. Finally by-laws were drawn in 1945 and the First President of the Parents' Club was Samuel A. Culbertson II. Col. William Spencer succeeded him and Mrs. Paul M. Holinger followed. By this time the merging of the two schools was pending.

In 1952 Mrs. Spencer Cone was President of the Parent Faculty Organization in the Girls School. This group had been founded by Mrs. Edward M. Dorr, its first president, who held that office for years. 1953-1954 was the first year for the combined Parents' Council of the joint schools. The presidents were:

- 1953-1954 Mrs. William J. Bowe
- 1954-1956 Mrs. Andrew McNally III
- 1956-1958 Mrs. Alfred Dowrie

- 1958-1960 Mrs. John T. Moss
- 1960-1962 Mrs. Edward Emery
- 1962-1964 Mrs. Barton Cameron
- 1964-1965 Mrs. Thomas R. Reeves
- 1965-1966 Mrs. Thomas A. Kelly
- 1966-1968 Mrs. William G. T. Hyer
- 1968-1970 Mrs. Herman T. Van Mell

Among the early benefactors, trustees, parents and friends were Edward Ryerson, Malcolm Boyle, Mrs. Augustus Maxwell, Kersey Coates Reed and others. A gift to the boys school by Mr. Reed of a large campus at California and Western Avenues with a playing field and field house was used for years for Athletic meets and Field Days, and added much to the property value and facilities of the school. The field was sold about 1959. Before this generous gift the boys went out to Lincoln Park for football and baseball while the girls concerned themselves with intensive field hockey and lacross both in the park and in the fenced in block on Lake Shore Drive now occupied by "1400".

The vision of generosity of the founding parents accounted in large measure for a calm and steady educational development without financial setbacks. But there had been bad financial years: 1893, 1907, 1921, and, most shattering of all, 1929. Some will remember that Depression, some not; new green coming up through blackened earth is not alarming, but others saw the fire. Latin buildings were getting old and the feet of some thousand students had taken a toll of stairs and floors. A field house, proper stage equipment, gym floors, exterior balcony removal, many improvements were needed and there were loans to worry about. Some holders of notes presented them to the school as paid gifts; tuition was raised.

Parents' Council

Here the young and energetic Parents Councils came forward. Where the annual Card Party and Tea had been the rule, they now branched out into stronger money-making ventures with great success. The \$1000 it produced in the Gym grew to \$4000 and it had drawn the Latin mothers into a friendly, cohesive group, alert to new possibilities for helping the school. By the time the two schools were combined a number of real money-makers were well established. The annual Book Week held in the gym was sponsored by several of the book stores and did well. Interest was roused not only in selling and buying but there were stockpiles for Christmas, with plenty of time to read the books before they were passed on. All this while the usual committees were functioning: the Library, the Dance, Parent

Programs and so on. Now came a real concentration in the "Spring Festival". The whole school was organized, with Mrs. Edward Dorr as General Chairman, to make one large effort. Every class and committee contributed. Neighboring schools were invited. Shows, sales, services, hobbies, fortune-telling, all culminated in a banquet, catered by the Hilton and served by the parents. Faculty and students helped to make it a \$10,000-day.

Most important since and continuing through the years with the greatest enjoyment and success have been Latin Night at the Symphony and Latin Night at Lyric Opera. Benefits, too, they offered learning in another setting, giving not only the orchestra and the great literature of music but also theatre, history and languages and they presented voices and drama in an exciting new setting—a cheering thought that Mozart and Shakespeare could be so funny. Students went to "Butterfly", "Aida", the "Barber of Seville" and others; some attended rehearsals and a few even were "extras". Even the lower grades had been going to afternoon symphony concerts for years.

The Turn About Shop, ensconced in the small two-story building on Stone Street, acted as a clearing house for outgrown uniforms and still good athletic equipment. For some time the girls had presented a neat appearance in white blouses, navy pleated skirts and blazers with the school emblem. An impressive array of hockey sticks, galoshes, books, playing and Christmas cards and everything else usable made life simpler for the shopping mother. This welcome service lasted a number of years and was like a forerunner of the shops which now contribute so tangibly to the comfort of hospital patients and their families. Even the annual Dog Show sent in its share to help with the improvements and needs, each effort continuing through the years with increasing enjoyment and success.

Extracurricular doings

As the schools of the Capitol take advantage of the cultural and governmental opportunities of Washington, so Latin trained its children in using the advantages of Chicago. They attended the symphony concerts which the Mothers Committee managed from the Fourth Grade on and the performances of the Lyric Opera, as have been mentioned. They knew the Art Institute and the Museum of Science and Industry and took tours to banks and business establishments which reflected the scope and energy of the city. But Athletics were life itself and the school found itself winning and losing with all its friends in the Independent Schools League. On many a cold windy sideline in Lincoln Park stood students, parents and faculty, an enthu-

siastic part of the picture. The dancing groups Burnique, Mayhew and Arthur Murray and even the class dances had difficulty competing with the white hot concern for the games.

Today

On the contemporary scene we find a city, not of two million, but of four; a school not of two hundred students, but of seven hundred. The neighborhood has so altered that the many handsome brownstone houses have given way to multi-family homes. The space the Potter Palmer house occupied, 1360-1380 Lake Shore Drive, now is called home by nine hundred families. The home of Abraham Lincoln's son, "Tad," at 74 East Scott, has disappeared from the scene. So have the homes of the McCormicks, Cranes, Ryersons, McClurgs, Palmers and Callners. But from these newer homes comes the current generation of Latin students to carry on a great tradition and live and study in the preparation for a full and generous life. And what of the great brick Plaza Hotel, huge, new and practically out of town in 1893 where President Cleveland stayed when he visited the World's Columbian Exposition! Gone, of course, but in its place at Clark Street and North Avenue stands the great, new 1970 Latin School of Chicago! Now after ninety years of growth and service for the city we must think again of financial responsibilities. But now there are thousands of alumni and friends to make the burden lighter and help us to complete a great Century of Progress.

1970

by

Mrs. William J. Bowe