

# Morton School Stories from 1977 Morton Centennial

# The Schools in Morton

*(Editor's note: This history of local schools was compiled and written by Eliza Ackerman, a lifetime resident of Morton and a member of one of the village's pioneer families. Miss Ackerman taught two years in rural schools before coming into Morton schools in 1928. Thirty years later she was named principal of Jefferson Grade School, a position she held until her retirement in 1973. TPC and Morton Historical Society are indebted to Miss Ackerman for her contribution to this Centennial history of her community.)*

Morton's first school house was built on Section 4 in Morton Township somewhere between the years 1828 and 1831. It was built in the area opposite what is now Oswald Park. It is claimed that Rev. William Brown, grandfather of Miss Lettie Brown for whom the new school in the Hyde Park Addition is named, taught the first school in his own cabin in the spring of 1831. This building was also used on Sundays as a Methodist Church.

The second school house in Morton Township was built on Section 16 at Evans Corner at the end of

North Main Street where the road bends and goes under the viaduct of I-74. All material and work was paid for in the currency of the day — labor and trade, no cash. This building was later used as a home by H.N. Crosby. At that time Uriah Crosby was the frontier settler and had to plow around his home to protect it from prairie fires, but the building of this school house induced others to settle in the neighborhood.

Morton's third school was built in the area of the Professional Building at 219 North Main Street. A man named Dr. Harris was the supervisor of this school and early communications indicate he was also supervisor of the Groveland School. This is quite interesting for today Groveland is part of the Morton Unit District #709. Mrs. Brown, wife of the Rev. William Brown is said to have taught this school from 1850 to 1870.

No general effort had been made in Illinois to establish a public school system throughout the state until 1825 when the legislature passed an act whereby public schools, supported by taxation were to be opened in all counties of the state. A majority of the people had



MAPLE GROVE SCHOOL — 1893

First Row: Ida Birky, Sam Frank, Mary Eigsti, Henry Goodyear, Ada Bartelmay, Wm. E. Birky.

Second Row: Ina Goodyear, Clara Frank, Lydia Smith, Sadie Bartelmay, Katie Frank, Ella Birky, Katie Hochstettler, Clara Birky, Matilda Frank.

Third Row: Anna Gerber (Teacher), John Frank, Charles Dodds, Bert Smith, Bert Dodds, Arch Bartelmay, Ben Metzler, Roy Sniffin, Howard Goodyear, Clyde Dodds, Albert Frank.

(Picture courtesy of Bob Conibear)

never been taxed to support schools of any kind and resented the idea of having to pay tuition for other people's children. This measure proved so unpopular that four years later the law was repealed and another law made which stated that no man should be taxed except by his own consent.

In 1844 a Convention of Educators was held in Peoria. They asked that the legislature impose a general school tax and establish a State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In 1853 the first State Association of Teachers met in Springfield, and in 1854 the legislature complied with their request and imposed a school tax. Ninian Edwards became the first State Superintendent.

It was about 1850 that Tazewell County incorporated all the townships in the county at one time and more tax money was available. This was an inducement for more schools in the county to be opened, and it was about that time that some dis-

tricts in Morton were formed and schools were built. According to the 1873 "Atlas of Tazewell County" five rural schools were in existence in Morton Township at that time, and there was also a Morton Public School.

These country schools were the Jefferson School District #42 located in Section 2 at Cooper Station along the Washington Road; the Crandall School District #43 located about 2 miles north of Morton in Section 9; the Buckeye School District #45 located about 3 miles east of Morton along Route 150; the Phillips School District #46 located about 2½ miles southeast of Morton; and the Maple Grove School District #47 located on the corner of South Main Street and Queenwood Road across from the Field Restaurant.

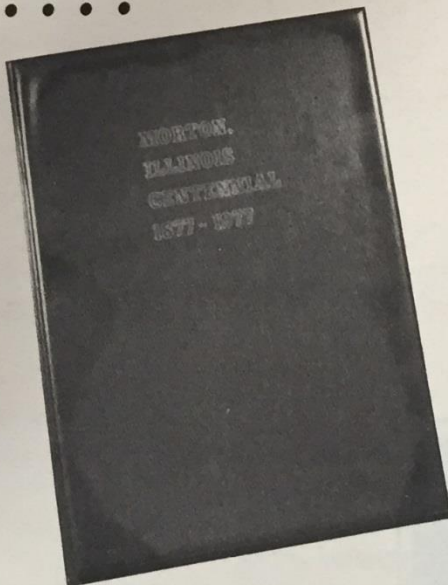
The exact date these country schools were built is not known. A Warranty Deed shows that Uriah H. Crosby of Tazewell County sold land to the School Trustees of Township 25 North, Range 3 West of the Third

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Principal Meridian for the consideration of \$10.00. This was for the Crandall School, and the deed was dated March 31, 1853 and was filed April 8, 1853.

This school had to be one of the early schools in the area for four generations of the Christian Ackerman family attended the Crandall School District. They were Christian Ackerman, himself, all of his family - John C., Lydia Ackerman (Bauman), Anna, Sarah, and Chris S., the families of John C., Lydia Bauman, and Chris S., the families of John C., Lydia Bauman, and Chris S., and the children of John C.'s son George and Lydia Bauman's daughter Anna (Mrs. Carl Schick).

The Jefferson School at Cooper Station was located in Morton Township just a few feet across the boundary line between Morton and Washington. Land from both townships made up this district.

These rural schools were one room schools which housed eight grades. Most of them were open eight months of the year, but attendance was erratic. In the early country schools the boys often stayed at home to work on the farm during the spring and fall months and attended school only during the winter months. Sometimes they attended school until they were 20 years old. According to stories that one hears these students often made life miserable for the teacher for

they caused extreme discipline problems.

One teacher was in charge of the whole curriculum. In the early schools pupils were not classified so much by grade level as by the reader, arithmetic, or speller they were using when in attendance.

The teacher often boarded with one of the families living in the District and was sometimes invited to spend a night in the home of other people in the District. How happy the pupils were to have the teacher spend a night in their homes!



BUCKEYE SCHOOL

(Picture courtesy of Ida Kaufman)

When it was time (usually 9:00 o'clock) for school to begin the teacher would stand in the doorway ringing a large hand bell. The children trooped in and took their seats, and this was the beginning of their school day.

School usually opened with the Lord's Prayer. Then there was the Opening Exercise. This was usually a singing session which lasted ten or fifteen minutes. As a variation sometimes the teacher would read to the group.

The day was divided into

numerous class periods five or ten minutes in length. The recitation bench was usually in the front of the room. When the teacher called a class, the children came to the front of the room and sat down on the bench. When a child was called upon to recite he stood for his recitation. There was much memorization and drill in the old schools. Lessons were learned and recited to the teacher.

The rest of the pupils were at their desks doing assignments, drill work at the blackboard, or possibly just listening to the class which was in session. Pupils in these country schools learned to be self-reliant and to study by themselves.

To cut down on the number of classes to be held in a day, classes were sometimes combined in the upper grades in subjects like geography or history. One year the seventh and eighth grades might be combined to take eighth grade geography, and during the next year seventh grade geography was taught. This was called alternation of subjects, and was used in subjects where it was not necessary that one level of learning immediately follow the other.

Most of these rural schools had a well with a pump. For years there was a drinking cup hanging at the well which everyone used. In the early 1900's this was declared unsanitary and each child was to have his own drinking cup. In some

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CRANDALL SCHOOL  
(Picture courtesy of Eliza Ackerman)



CRANDALL SCHOOL — 1905

In front holding slate: Sam Seidel.  
 First Row: Walter Gunther, Mildred Foster, George Ackerman, Mary Ackerman Jacob, Anna Seidel Burger, Mary Belsley, Minnie Seidel, Maggie Gunther Hess, Louisa Belsley.  
 Back Row: Hannah Ackerman, Katie Nuest Wiegand, Joe Belsley, Ruth Crandall Brecher, Ann Moschel (Teacher), Lydia Nuest, Ellen Crandall Huser, Mary Seidel Gunther, Victor Schwarzentraub.  
 (Picture courtesy of Eliza Ackerman)

schools cases were made for the drinking cups and were hung on the wall. Individual cups were put into these cases and placed on numbered hooks. Each child was given a number, and that cup was his to use when he wanted a drink of water.

Children carried their lunches to school. There was usually a shelf in the classroom or in the hall for the lunch pails. In good weather the lunch hour was usually one hour in length from twelve to one o'clock, giving the children time to play outdoors. During the bad weather the noon recess was shortened to one-half hour. School closed at 3:30 or 4:00 o'clock depending on the length of the lunch period.

Each school district wanted their school to be recognized as a standard school. If the school was recognized a sign stating "Standard School" was placed on the outside of the school. To be a Standard School certain requirements had to be met. This certainly helped to improve the conditions of the schools for buildings were improved, there was increased efficiency in teaching, and new equipment was purchased. Each rural school had three directors, and they usually met at the school at the end of the month.

The early rural teachers were high school graduates who may have taken summer classes at Normal —

but if a candidate passed the teacher's examination that was all that was required. As late as 1925 teaching certificates were still issued to high school graduates who passed examinations for teaching and supervising through the tenth grade.

The teachers of the rural schools usually were responsible for the janitor work, and they were to have the school house warm at least one-half hour before school started in the morning. In school records of the Crandall School of 1886 a contract was made with someone to build fires for three months at 10 cents per day. At the end of the year, this person was paid a total of \$6.40. Sometimes a child would stay after school to help with some of the work like cleaning the blackboards and erasers.

Some of the old records of the Crandall School were available. For the school year of 1883-1884 Miss Jesse Avery was hired to teach the school at \$35.00 a month. Sometimes teachers were paid a few dollars more for the winter months than the spring and fall months because the enrollment was greater at that time. An example of this is that during the 1885-1886 school year 38 children were in attendance at the Crandall School, but some of these students attended only during the

winter months. Of these 38 pupils, 13 of them were from 15 to 19 years of age. During April and May only 26 pupils were in attendance. The older children probably stayed at home to help on the farm.

Between 1900 and 1910 two more rural districts were formed in Morton Township. These were the May School District #131 and the Prairie Creek School District #134. The May School was located on the Henry Aberle property near the area of Westwood Park. Freda Speck was the first teacher, and Henry Aberle, William Zimmerman, and Louis May were the first directors of the school.

The Prairie Creek School was located on the Joseph Miller property on the corner of South Fourth Street and Broadway Road. This school opened for classes about 1908. Ben Yentes, Joseph Miller, and Carl Rassi were the first directors, and Miss Nellie Fox was the first teacher in that district.

The Prairie Creek School was somewhat different from the other rural schools in Morton Township since the windows were placed on the back of the building rather than on the sides. This school faced the south, and this was done for better lighting effects — to prevent shadows on the desks of the pupils.

In February of 1937 the Phillips School burned on a cold winter night. It was not long before classes started in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig Kieser. This was the large brick house located next to the Illinois Terminal Railway tracks on East Queenwood Road. Lois Pflederer (now Mrs. Baer) from Tremont was the teacher of the Phillips School at that time. Classes were held there until the close of the

school term and by fall of that year the new school house was ready.

These rural schools served as the community center for the district. Two big events during the school year were the Christmas Program in which every child in the school participated, and the picnic on the last day of school.

The Lafayette School District #54 was located just across the boundary line in Washington Township, but land from both Morton and Washington comprised this district. After this school closed some of the pupils who lived in this district came to the Morton Schools.

Another rural school which played a part in the Morton School System was the Prairie View School District #118 located in Groveland Township and was formed in 1926. This school has an interesting history.

District #79 School had been located along Muller Road, and for over 70 years the boundaries had remained the same. After the completion of the electric railway system through the north center portion of District #79, Gardena was platted, lots were sold, and homes were erected in this area. The population increased rapidly, and with its demands for closer and more convenient school facilities for those living in that portion of the district, in 1916 it was voted by the north portion to relocate the District #79 School. The school was then moved over ¾ of a mile north and ¼ of a mile east to its present location in Gardena. This school district was then approximately 4 miles long north and south and 1 to 1¾ miles in width.

At this time there were fourteen families with thirty-three legal



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voters with 15 children of school age residing south of Muller Road. Some pupils were now required to travel over three miles to school, and in February of 1923 an election was held for a new building in this area. This proposition was defeated, and in March of the same year a petition was filed with the County Board of Trustees for the creation of a new school district. After many meetings in court between the old and new districts, in April of 1926 School District #118 was finally formed. A board of directors was elected in May 1926 and on June 12, 1926 an election was held in the new district to vote on the proposition of locating and purchasing a school site, building a school house, and issuing bonds in the sum of \$3500.00. The site for the school was on the Edwin Roth Property, and the school was reached by lanes.

School started on September 13, 1926 with Miss Caroline Strunk as the first teacher. The building was not completed, and for that reason the front room of an old homestead was used. A family continued to reside in the remaining rooms of the house. Students brought their own makeshift desks, and Edwin Roth one of the original directors made the chalkboards. There were seven students when the school opened in September. The new school was completed in November, and moving



CRANDALL SCHOOL 1924-25

First Row: Edward Ackerman, Viola Ackerman, Ralph Hauter, Benjamin Bauman, Eugene Carey, Albert Wiedman, Robert Ackerman, George Carey.

Second Row: Viola Denne Goetz, Elton Oswald, Elmer Wiedman, Clarence Oswald, Rachel Bauman, Elsie Denne Stout, Emanuel Ackerman.

Third Row: Orin Aupperle, Elmer Denne, Elsie Wiedman Knapp, Alma Getz (Teacher), Louise Bauman Hirstein, Homer Oswald.

(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Arthur Goetz)

day to the new school was around Thanksgiving Day.

This school had a short life. The doors closed in the spring of 1944, and the district became a part of the Morton School System.

In 1870 it was found that there were 89 pupils of school age in the Morton Public School District. As the old school house had the capacity for scarcely half that num-

ber, the question of building a new school was forced upon the directors. On February 4, 1871, a meeting was called for the purpose of discussing a new school, and a vote was taken resulting in 26 for a new school and 9 against the expenditure of \$2500.00 to build a new school house. At that time many of the townspeople were appalled that such a tremendous sum of money

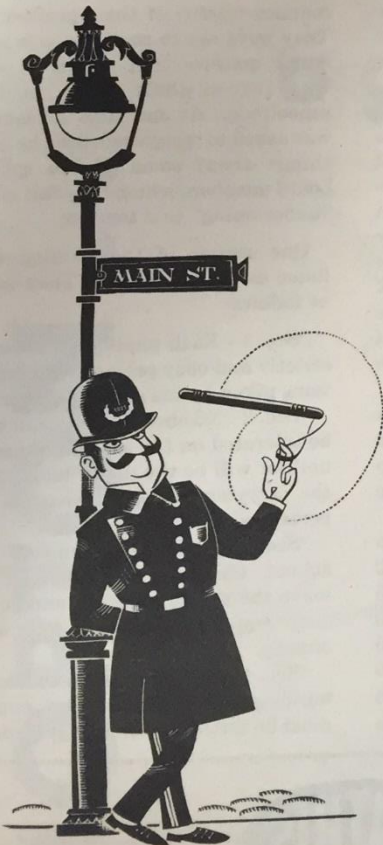
was to be spent for a new school building. The building was to be located on the ground where the present Jefferson School is located in about the area of the Primary Wing.

A man from Peoria named Mr. Hicks drew up the specifications for the building. These plans were adopted and after advertisements for bids, the contract was let to L.W. Hampton. The school was completed and furnished in time for the fall term of school which was opened up with Mr. J.H. Pirkey as Principal and Miss Emma Ramsey as his assistant.

During the fall of 1871 over 80 maple trees were planted to beautify the school grounds, but these were destroyed by the carelessness of someone. After this others were planted at different times.

By 1877 the school had grown to such an extent that it was found necessary to build more rooms to accommodate the children of the district. Two rooms were added to the north of the original building, the same entrance being used for both old and new parts. This addition somewhat marred the architectural beauty of the building, but it was certainly necessary.

This addition of the new rooms did not suffice very long, and by 1889 or 1890 two more rooms were added on to the south side of the building. The building now had six rooms all of which were crowded to their



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PRAIRIE CREEK SCHOOL 1924-25

Front Row: Roy Rumbold (deceased), Richard Frank, Jesse Kaiser, Lydia Barth Johnson, Virginia Yentes Mercer, Erma Yentes, (deceased), Wilma Roth Fehr, Carl Rassi, Jr., Harold Roth, Arnold Rassi.

Second Row: Robert Yentes, Matilda Rassi Legel, Grace Musselman Zeigler, John Barth, Jr., Marie Rassi Pfaffman, Margaret Rassi Romesburger, Paul Rumbold, Sam Rumbold.

Third Row: Delmer Reinholdt (Teacher), Harry Miller (deceased), Clarence Musselman, Sarah Barth Frank, Marie Rumbold Moser, Bernice Yentes Lehman, Louis Rumbold, John Frank, Jr.

(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Harm Johnson)



PRAIRIE VIEW SCHOOL 1926-27

First Row: Walter Pfeifer, Harry Marion, Richard Roth.

Second Row: Alice Roth, Mildred Pfeifer, Irene Roth, Caroline Moul, Evelyn Frey.

Third Row: Weldon Eisele, Harvey Allenspach, Joseph Allenspach, Marshall Moul, Benjamin Allenspach.

(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Richard Miller)

capacity especially in the lower grades.

The bell that was placed on the top of the original school building on Jefferson Street was purchased and put in place with funds raised by entertainments for that purpose. The Morton Public School District at that time was thought too poor to bear further taxation to buy the bell. This bell was used to call the children to school for many years. The bell now is standing in the front of the Jefferson School as a monument and reminder of its many years of service.

By 1895 the school had over 400 books in the school library and was the proud possessor of two sets of encyclopedias. According to the School Catalog of 1895 this library compared very favorably with any school library in the county.

The school in 1895 had three advanced school years for the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. In the first year of advanced work Reading, Spelling, Writing, United States History, Arithmetic, Grammar, and Geography were taught. Subjects for the second advanced

year were Classics, Grammar, Physiology, Arithmetic, United States History, and Word Analysis. For the third advanced year the subjects taught were Algebra, Physical Geography, General History, Physics, Civil Government, Botany, and Zoology. This was really the equivalent of high school work, but since there was no high school in Morton at that time, an advanced department was included in the grade school.

The Morton Grade School was always considered an excellent school system. According to the "Catalog of Morton Public School - 1895" the school from the start had moved forward, improved its grading, and kept abreast with the time. The Course of Study was on a par with the best graded schools in the country. The grade of instruction was such as to fit one for a business career or if pupils took the complete course as outlined in the Catalog they could easily secure a First Grade Certificate to teach.

The Directors of the School in 1895 were G.R. Shafer, W.R. Lackland, and William Moschel. The

teachers were Principal, W.O. McIntire; Grammar Department, Katherine Hallstein; Intermediate Department, Carrie Mosiman; Second Primary, Daisy Roberts; and Primary, Myrtle Mooberry.

The first graduation exercises were held in 1892. Graduates of that class were Nina Roberts, Nellie Farlin, Myrtle Mooberry, and Daisy Roberts. In 1893, Charles May, Maggie Smith, Edith Tarbell, and Ruth Smith graduated, and in 1895 Carrie Mosiman and Lettie Brown were the graduates. Several of the graduates of the advanced classes became members of the Morton Public School faculty.

In the early graduation exercises the programs were quite elaborate and included besides several speeches a number of orchestral selections. The graduation exercises in the early 1900's were held in the Morton Hall which was a wooden building that stood in the 100 block of West Jefferson Street where the Morton Civic Building later stood until it burned in 1967. The location is now a parking lot.

As a supplement to tax dollars pupils were required to pay tuition in the early years of the Morton Grade School. The tuition schedule was as follows:

	Per Month
Advanced Dept.	\$2.00
Grammar Dept.	1.75
Intermediate Dept.	1.50
Second Primary Dept.	1.25
Primary Dept.	1.00

According to the Catalog of 1895 all children residing in the Morton

Public School District #7 (later District #44 and after consolidation District #644) between the ages of six and twenty-one were allowed to attend the Morton Public School.

Pupils could be detained in their rooms during recess or after the closing hours for tardiness, unsatisfactory lessons, or for persistent failure to observe the directions of the teachers.

One of the rules for teachers was that they should at all times conduct themselves in an exemplary manner worthy of their profession. They were not to participate in any social matters that would in any way injure their work in the schoolroom. At one time a teacher was asked to resign because she said things about some of the school board members which they felt were "unbecoming" to a teacher.

One section of the Catalog was listed as "Pupil Duties". They were as follows:

"Sec. 1 - Each pupil shall observe strictly and obey promptly all directions given by his or her teacher.

"Sec. 2 - No obscene language will be tolerated on the school premises, neither will be the use of tobacco or the carrying of deadly weapons be permitted.

"Sec. 3 - On the dismissal of school, children are required to leave the school premises and go to their respective homes, quietly and orderly.

"Sec. 4 - Any injury done to school buildings or furniture by pupils must be settled for in ten days, and a

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failure to do so shall be considered sufficient ground for suspension.

"Sec. 5 - No pupil shall be allowed to leave the room during school hours without the permission of the teacher, and then only in case of sickness, request of parent or guardian, or absolute necessity.

"Under no circumstances will pupils be permitted to leave the grounds during recess or the noon hour, except to go to the homes for dinner or to perform some necessary errand for the teacher.

"Sec. 6 - Pupils who are not able to do the work in the grades in which they have been placed may be put in classes suited to their needs at the discretion of the Principal.

"Sec. 7 - Pupils shall not be permitted to bring to school books or stationery foreign to purposes of actual school work."

In this Catalog it also said that Promotions could be made at any time providing a fitness for higher work was manifest to the Principal. Semi-annual examinations were held for this purpose, and no pupil could be transferred from one grade to another except by the consent of the Principal.

No pupil could be graduated whose standing in any subject was less than 80 or whose general average was less than 85 or whose deportment was less than 95.

Morton continued to grow and it was not long before Morton was in



PRAIRIE VIEW SCHOOL

(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Richard Miller)

need of seven classrooms. Sometime during the 1890's a small building resembling the country schools was built. This building was located directly to the south of the larger building and faced Walnut Street which is now Adams Street. This was a primary building and for many years was used for first grade with Miss Lettie Brown as the teacher.

Records of the early 1900's show that there were seven classroom teachers including the principal. Classrooms were often crowded and the schoolboard members often had trouble deciding which two classrooms should be put together under one teacher.

School records show that for the 1901-1902 school year, the principal was hired at \$80.00 a month, the first grade teacher for \$42.50 a month, and the rest of the teachers at \$40.00 a month. The school janitor was hired for \$35.00. By September of 1902, the enrollment at the Morton Grade School was approximately 250 pupils.

In September of 1904 the following resolution was offered and adopted:

"That no child be permitted to enter school at the opening of the school year who will become six years of age later than November 1st of that year. Children who become 6 years of age between Novem-

ber 1st and March 1st of the following year may enter March 1st. Children who become 6 years of age later than March 1st will not be permitted to enter school until the opening of the following school year."

The Roll Book for the Morton Grade School shows that a total of 51 pupils were enrolled in the first grade for the 1914-1915 school term. Of this number 16 pupils were listed as members of the spring class.

By 1919 classes were getting more crowded, and at a special meeting of the Board of Education on September 10 of that year it was decided to do away with the Spring Class. All children who became six years old before February 1, 1920 were allowed to enroll in September, and all children arriving at the age of six after February 1 were not permitted to enter school until the following school term.

Teachers who taught in the Morton Public School were required to live in Morton while they were teaching. This was a school policy for many years. In May of 1906 the School Board passed a ruling that the teachers be required to spend at least three Sundays out of, each month in Morton. How long this rule was in effect is not known.

The school calendar in the early years of the Morton Schools was quite flexible. Schools were closed at times for an important event even

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though it was not on the School Calendar. A few examples of this are as follows: In 1910 there was a Farmer's Institute in Green Valley. Morton Grade School had prepared an exhibit for this institute. The School Board members decided that two of the grade teachers be permitted to dismiss school on the first day of the Institute to take the exhibit to Green Valley and see that it be placed properly. Two other teachers were permitted to dismiss their classes on the last day of the Institute in order that they could attend the meeting and could take down the exhibit and return it to school.

In 1914 a full holiday was given for the High School County Meet. In 1919 school was dismissed for a day because of a Stock Show.

In April of 1917 the State Teacher's Association held a meeting in Bloomington. Any teachers who wished to go could dismiss their classes to go to this meeting. Those who did not care to attend were to stay and teach their classes.

In April 1914 two ladies were elected as members of the Board of Education — Mrs. William Voelpel and Mrs. Levi Mosiman. Mrs. Voelpel served as a member of the Board for one term of three years, and Mrs. Mosiman served for several terms. In 1917 Mrs. Grant Conibear was elected and she, too, served for several terms.

Mrs. Mosiman played a big part in getting Home Economics started in the Morton Schools. Mr. and Mrs. Mosiman made a trip down to the University of Illinois to make plans for this.

In the spring of 1916 a special meeting of the Grade School and High School Boards was called, and it was decided that the Grade School participate in the courses in Household Science and Manual Training with the High School. The High School Board agreed with this plan with the understanding that Mr. Litton who was then Principal of the Grade School teach the Manual Training classes for the upper grade boys, and Miss Florence Lewis teach Domestic Science to both grade and



MORTON GRADE SCHOOL — FOURTH GRADE — 1900

First Row: Carl Miller, Henry Ellison, Harry Steiner, John Aberle, Otto Seidel, Willie Welk, Orville Stamm, Will Waldbeser.

Second Row: Fanny Beyer, Pearl Daily, Emma Oekel, Mabel Beeman, Anna Ackerman, Anna Jacob, Rosa Fehr, Carrie Rapp, Tillie Friedeinger, Henry Tuf-

fentsamer.

Third Row: Minnie Rapp, Leah Suchert, Carolyn Kipfer, Lena Funk, Eliz. Andrews, Mary Hauter, Caroline Price (Teacher), Lydia Waldbeser, Emma Miller, Emma Rapp, \_\_\_\_\_ Duncan, John Wittmer.

(Picture courtesy of Alma Wittmer)

high school students. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade girls participated in the Domestic Science Program. The students involved in these programs would walk to the high school for their lessons, and according to some people who attended school at that time, the trips back and forth to the High School were the fun part of this program. This arrangement was carried on for several years, and during the 1920's the program was dropped.

A big event in the community was the picnic at the school on the last day. Parents, friends, relatives, and business people all came to the picnic. Sometimes there were a thousand people there. The picnic was usually held indoors, and tables

were set up in each classroom. Some mothers had to fix several baskets depending on the number of children in the family who were attending school for each class had dinner in their own room. For many years in all the turmoil and confusion of the picnic, the report cards had to be handed out also, and each child was anxious to see if he had passed to the next grade.

As early as 1903 mention was made in the school records that owing to lack of funds, the hiring of a music teacher be deferred. Finally in 1917 a special music teacher was hired, and since that time music has been a part of the curriculum. The first music teacher hired was a lady from El Paso, Miss Davis. She was

hired to do the music work and also the necessary substituting for the principal. After a few months, it was decided that the music teacher should also do the substituting for absent teachers dismissing her music classes if necessary.

Morton has been fortunate to have a wonderful music program. In the 1940's band was added to the Grade School Curriculum and in 1973 stringed instruments became a part of the music program.

By 1920 the advisability of remodeling the school or constructing a new building was discussed, but in January of 1921 it was decided that because of the high prices of material and labor and the prospect of a decline in prices, it

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would be to the best interest of the community to defer the matter of building for at least one year and to make the necessary repairs to the building.

The town kept on growing, and seven classrooms were not enough to take care of eight grade levels. It was finally decided that Morton could no longer get along with the old building. A new structure was necessary, and in 1928 the original building of the present Jefferson School was erected on the same grounds as the old building but a short distance west of it. Members of the Board of Education at this time were: President, S.W. Rapp, Secretary, Louis Drexler, Joseph A. Getz, C.W. Ackerman, Charles Wurst, Arch Bartelmay, and John Strunk. Royer, Danely, and Smith were the Architects and John W. Montgomery the contractor.

The building had eight classrooms built around a gymnasium. There were four classrooms on the main floor and four upstairs. The building also had a Principal's office, a library, a teacher's lounge, and restrooms for the boys and girls on both floors. Morton now had a gym, and it was not long before Mr. Grundy who was then the Principal of the Grade School, was coaching a basketball team. The gym also had a stage and served as an auditorium for the school. Many fine school operettas and programs have been performed on this stage. The new school was considered one of the finest and most up to date schools in the area.

After the new building was erected, the large old building was razed, and the primary building was sold. It was purchased by Miss Tillie Roth, who had it moved to the west edge of town on West Jackson Street. It was then remodeled into a home for Miss Roth.

Classes were first held in the new Jefferson School (then known as the Morton Public School or Morton Grade School) during the 1929-1930 school year. It was wonderful having a new school with modern conveniences, and the people of Morton were very proud of their new build-



MORTON GRADE SCHOOL — FIRST GRADE — 1904

First Row: Edward Weaver, Unidentified, Emanuel Jacob, Jake Funk, Sam Wagler, Unidentified, Alphonse Welk, Carl Stroh.  
Second Row: Lena Rein Kuntz, Elizabeth Stamm, Lena Aberle Wiegand, Carl Heubach, Helen Strunk, Floyd Engel, Joe Hauter, Manuel Wagler, Eliza Welk Belsley, John Rapp, Margaret Kruse.  
Third Row: Mary Arends, Lydia Tuffentsamer, Sally

Rapp, Lydia Hauter Watkins, Carl Voegelé, Frieda Doughty, Floyd Diemer, Stella Brunnemeyer Smith, Minnie Andrews, Margaret Suchert, Miss Lettie Brown (Teacher), Annie Rieger, — Hill, Martha Rapp, Eva Hill, Angie Andrews, Dora Diemer, Edna Grimm, Elizabeth Aberle Wagenbach, Leah Claudin, Edward Waldbeser.

(Picture courtesy of Eliza Belsley)

ing with its lovely gym. Ward Grundy was the Principal and eighth grade teacher. The other teachers were as follows: Seventh Grade, Mr. Blackburn; Sixth Grade, Fern Smith; Fifth Grade, Anna Moschel; Fourth Grade, Eva Papenhaus; Third Grade, Eliza Ackerman; Second Grade, Caroline Strunk; First Grade, Lettie Brown; and Music, Gertrude McGinnis (later Mrs. C.H. Harker).

The old school building did not have an office or board room. When the school board had a meeting at the school building, it had to be held in a classroom. For that reason the

location of the school board meetings depended upon the members. While Dr. H.L. Yoder was President of the board many of the meetings were held in his office. While Mrs. Conibear was clerk of the board, the meetings were usually held in the Conibear Home. Minutes of board meetings indicated that meetings were often held in the Commercial Club Rooms. After the new grade school was built, the meetings were then held in the office of the school.

By 1944 Morton had outgrown the new building, and six classrooms were added onto the back of the

building — three rooms on each side. Two of these rooms were located below ground level.

By 1948, six more rooms were added onto the back — three on each side as before with two of these rooms being basement rooms. It was about this time that consolidation took place and the Morton Grade School District #44 became the Morton Community Consolidated School District #644. The children from the rural schools were now brought into town to school, and it was at this time that school buses came into use in Morton. At that time five school buses were used.



MORTON GRADE SCHOOL — 1900  
(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Arthur Goeltz)

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What happened to the country schools when consolidation took place? In the cases of the schools that were newest in the district like the May School and Prairie Creek School the land went back to the people who had given the land for school purposes, for these schools had been in existence for less than fifty years at the time of consolidation. The May School property went back to the Henry Aberle family and was then sold to Smallenbergers. The building was torn down.

The Prairie Creek School Property went back to the Joseph Miller family. The building was made into a home and was used for that purpose until recently when a new home was built on the school grounds. The old building is still standing there.

The five school properties which had been in existence before the 1870's were sold at auction. The Cooper School and Phillips School were both remodeled into homes and are being used for that purpose today.

The Crandall School property was surrounded on three sides by Ackerman farm land and was purchased by the J. C. Ackerman family. It was used by the Baptists for church services for a time. The building was finally razed and the land converted back to farm land. The old pump



MORTON GRADE SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS — 1915

Front Row: Art Hauter, Maurice Rudd.  
 Second Row: Ella Yoder Hoerr, Esther Gingrich, Louise Getz, Sadie Getz Hauter.  
 Third Row: Fred Oekel, Jake Getz, John Welk, Jr., Mr. McCue (Principal).

(Picture courtesy of Eliza Belsley)

which was located on the school property is still standing in the field.

The Buckeye School was made into a restaurant and tavern and was in existence for several years. It finally closed its doors and the building was torn down. Today the land is used for farming.

The Maple Grove School was left standing for a few years until Mrs.

Lydia Albrecht who bought the Norquist farm nearby purchased the corner lot where the old school still stood across from the present Field Restaurant. The building was moved to the Albrecht farm where it was used as a cattle shed for a while. Then an addition was built onto it, and it was enlarged into an implement shed.

When the Prairie View School was absorbed by the Morton Community Consolidated School District, the school was torn down carefully and rebuilt somewhere in the vicinity for a home.

After consolidation Morton Grade School was soon filled to capacity, and in 1950 a third construction was completed. This added a six room primary section to the east side of the building.

Morton Grade School was the only building in District #644 until 1954 when the Junior High School was formed. At that time the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were moved to the Junior High School, and the elementary building had the first four grade levels.

Shortly after the schools were consolidated a hot lunch program was started at the Grade School. A cafeteria, however, was soon opened in the school. A wall was taken out between the two basement rooms on the west side of the building, and this room was used for a cafeteria for several years. By 1964 more cafeteria space was needed, and the bus garage located in the back of the school was remodeled into a cafeteria. A wall was again put up in the basement, and these two rooms were used for classrooms.

In 1955 Kindergarten was added to the curriculum. Before this time any kindergarten classes held in Morton had been private classes. Mrs. Louise Gordon and Mrs. Beverly Shull were the first teachers

hired to teach kindergarten. Four classes were in session during that first year.

It was a year or two later that Eliza Ackerman was made assistant principal of the Jefferson School serving in that capacity for two years. She then took over the duties of principal. She retired in 1973 and Alan Larocco became principal.

It was in 1959 that the Morton Community Consolidated School District decided that the school needed a Speech Therapist and Mrs. Sandra Bump was hired. Mrs. Bump who was just out of college set up an excellent speech program, and Morton has had speech therapy since that time.

When the Tazewell County Special Education Association came into existence, Speech Therapy became a part of that program. The Morton School District has joined this association and receives services through them.

By 1960 all the classrooms of the Morton Grade School were filled and overcrowded. The decision was made to build a new school at 1100 South Fourth Street. The school was completed in the summer of 1961 and was named Ward Grundy School after Mr. Grundy who had been principal of the Morton Grade School for many years. It was opened for students in the fall of the year. This school is attractively located on a ten acre site adjacent to Idlewood Park. The original building consisted of 11 classrooms, an all-purpose room, kitchen, workroom, teacher's room, and office.

Eight classrooms were used during the first year of operation with personnel as follows: Kindergarten, Bernice Oswald and Glenna Coddington (now Mrs. Ferrell); First Grade, Helen Schmidgall; Second Grade, Pauline Pittenger; Third Grade, Edythe Furrh; Fourth Grade, Mary Zehr; Fifth Grade and Assistant Principal, David Diemer; Hearing Impaired, Barbara Ort; Physical Education, Lillian Dallinger; and Speech Therapist, Sandra Bump.

As the Morton community grew additional elementary space was needed. In 1966 a six room addition was added to the primary wing of the Ward Grundy School, and in 1968 four rooms were added to the intermediate wing of the building.

When the Grundy School was built, Morton Grade School no longer seemed an appropriate name for the elementary building located at 220 East Jefferson Street. It was then that the name was changed to Jefferson School.

By 1964 both Jefferson and Grundy Schools were overcrowded. A referendum was passed in April of 1964, and the decision was made to build a new school. This school was to be located at 100 South Nebraska Avenue. It was built on an eleven acre site and was named the Lincoln

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School. It was first occupied on September 1, 1965 with Wayne Sutter as Principal. The teachers for the first year were: Kindergarten, Glenna Ferrell; First Grade, Doris Morton; Second Grade, Madeline Strunk; Third Grade, Frances Naron; Fourth Grade, Millie Holder; Fifth Grade (2 sections), Gail Delfs and Ann McConkey; Sixth Grade (2 sections), Fern Downs and Joyce Strunk for 1/2 day with the principal teaching the other half day; Music, Mary Swanstrom; Physical Education, Lillian Dallinger; and Speech Therapy, Linda Jenkins. The enrollment for the first year was 288 pupils.

On January 25, 1966 another referendum was passed, and 14 classrooms, a set of restrooms, and additional equipment were added to the Lincoln School. This addition was first occupied in September of 1967, and by this time the school had an enrollment of 575 students, plus full time physical education and music teachers and an E.M.H. teacher.

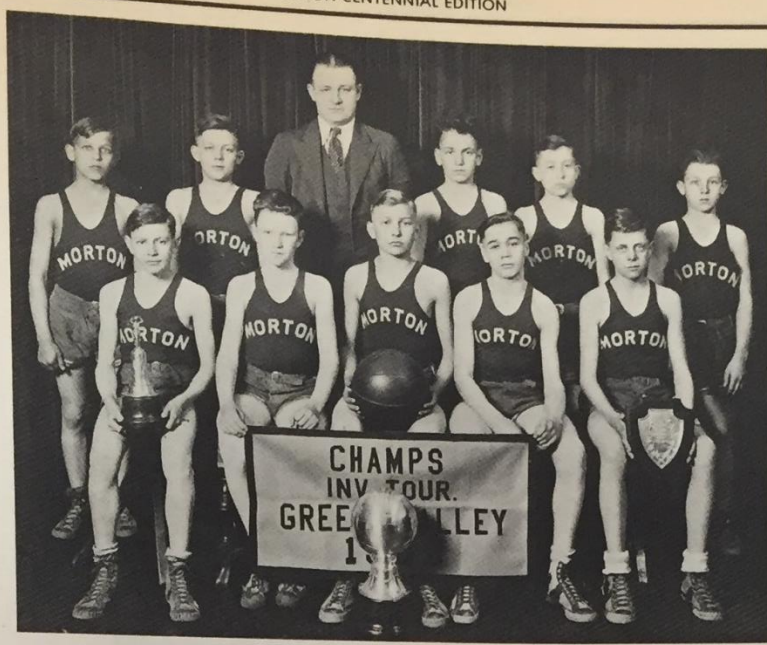
In 1968 Mr. Sutter, the Principal of Lincoln School, was hired as Assistant Superintendent of District #644. Jolyon Webb, who had been a sixth grade teacher at the Jefferson School now became Principal.

When the decision was made that Morton would build a new high school, Morton Community Consolidated School District #644 purchased the previous high school. The 50 year old part of that building was demolished during the summer of 1954. The 1939 addition to the former high school building consisting of classrooms and a gym was occupied by the Junior High School that fall.

Ward Grundy was Superintendent of all the Morton Schools at that time serving both the high school and grade school districts. Members of the teaching staff were: Principal and Social Studies, Joseph Witzig; English, Doris Blair; Math, Ethel Brown; Science and Coach, Terence Whitsitt; Band, Rudy Jungst; and Vocal Music, Donna Paton.

Construction was begun in the summer of 1954 on the site of the old high school building for a two story addition to the Junior High School. In September 1955 school opened with the addition of a cafeteria, Industrial Arts Shop, and a Home Economics classrooms. Henry Ort was appointed teacher of Industrial Arts and Irene Duniway was hired to teach Home Economics.

Joseph Witzig served as Principal of the Junior High and Jefferson School for a few years, but he had more responsibilities added in 1958 when he was appointed Superintendent of District #644. As the new schools in the district were opened



**MORTON GRADE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS-1932**

Front Row: Ben Rassi, George Brines, Dale Bartelmay, Howard Waldbeser, Gilbert Rapp.  
 Second Row: Bob Getz, Jack Voorhees, Ward Grundy (Coach), Joe Allenspach, Wilbert Burger, Henry Augsburg.  
 The large trophy in the front is the State Championship Trophy.  
 (Picture courtesy of Howard Waldbeser)

ings, and later the sixth grade classes were moved back. Today the Junior High School has only the seventh and eighth grade classes in the building.

In 1963 due to lack of space and increased enrollments, the Industrial Arts course was disbanded temporarily. Henry Ort was assigned to the principalship of the Junior High School allowing Joseph Witzig to devote full time duties as Superintendent of District #644 with the Grundy School now included. Industrial Arts was again added as a part of the Junior High School curriculum in 1969.

Additions to the Junior High School building were made in 1960, 1963, and 1967. The 1967 addition was a major construction project by adding classrooms on the east, west, and south sides of the building.

When the Junior High School was started in 1954 there were six home rooms and now there are twenty-four. As of February 1, 1977 the Junior High had thirty-seven

teachers in all, with a total of 676 students. Courses being taught are as follows: Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Industrial Arts, Home Economics, Art, Vocal Music, Instrumental Music (both Band and Orchestra) and Physical Education.

Morton Junior High School has always been active in sports. As of the 1976-1977 school year Morton Grade School or Morton Junior High School basketball teams have gone to the State Tournament twenty times. The lightweights won three State Basketball Tournaments before the formation of the Junior High School — in 1932, 1936, and 1938. The Junior High lightweight teams were State Champions in 1962, 1964, and 1974. The heavyweights were first place winners in the state in 1956. This makes a total of seven State Championships — a wonderful record.

Besides basketball and Physical Education, the Morton Junior High School is interested in baseball, track, and volleyball.

By 1902 Morton was ready for a high school building. Up to this time advanced classes had been taught in connection with grade school work. Teachers of these classes were W.O. McIntire and H.R. Dennis. Both of these men did their teaching while they were principals of the Morton Public School.

In 1902 a High School Board of Education was chosen. The Board Members elected consisted of Peter Schweitzer, President, B. F. Smallenberger, Secretary, Henry Sharp, C. L. Sanwald, and Moses S. Beyer. This board was elected by a special election on May 10, 1902. The first meeting of the Board of Education was held on May 17, 1902. The members were considering a site and construction of the high school when a petition signed by more than two hundred representatives was presented to them, asking that the proposition to establish a Township High School be resubmitted to the voters at the spring election in 1903. This was done but in spite of the opposition the proposition carried. Of the 226 votes cast, 141 were cast for the building.

The site of the building caused considerable discussion, but this was finally settled by William Moschel who sent a letter to the School Board stating that he would purchase a tract of land from Joseph Belsley on either Tremont Street (now Main Street) or at the head of Church Street (now Third Street) and would donate four acres of land and suitable streets for use as a site for the proposed high school.


This generous act of Mr. Moschel stimulated much interest and by October 1, 1903 bonds to the sum of \$24,000 had been issued, the architect's plans had been accepted, contracts had been let, and work was begun immediately. The contract called for the building to be completed by September 1, 1904.

The School Board met with many obstacles, and before the end of the first year three directors had resigned; but in spite of all these things, by September of 1904 the school was ready to open.

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1904 with an attendance of twenty students under the instruction of C. T. Law and Bertha Duerkop. By November a third teacher, Madge Dinsmore, was added. After the school was opened much of the opposition was forgotten, and many of the most strong opposers began to see the advantages of the high school and were eager to have their children attend.

The first entertainment held in the high school was by the Morton Military Band. This was a benefit for the high school library, and according to the records a nice sum was realized.

Until the year 1915 three teachers were regularly employed, and only academic courses were taught. By 1915 sewing was introduced under the instruction of Mrs. Cook but not as a regular high school course. In 1916 Domestic Science became an accredited study with Miss Lewis as the teacher. Manual Training was added in 1916, and became an accredited course in 1917 under Mr. Yaeger. In 1921 a second year of Manual Training was added.

The high school was remodeled in 1921, and additional supports were added. Some of the classrooms were enlarged by removing partition walls.

Morton High School had a steady growth, and by the 1924-1925 school year the enrollment was more than eighty students with six instructors including the Principal. It was during this year that Commercial Subjects were added to the curriculum. During this school year Morton Township High School was placed on the accredited list of the North Central Association. This was a high honor for the school, for at that time there were only two other high schools in the county on the accredited list of that association.

Morton's strength and ability in athletics and literary events were recognized in County Meets at an early date in the history of the school. Besides track Morton also had baseball and basketball teams.

According to a basketball score book for the 1910-1911 school year



Morton Township High School built in 1903. (Picture courtesy of Robert Beyer)

basketball was in existence in Morton at that time. This book belonged to T.B. Duncanson who was then principal of the grade school. He was referee for several of the games played. The Morton School had games with the Morton Regulars, Mackinaw, East Peoria High School, East Peoria Athletes, and the Danvers Champions.

Some newspaper clippings about some of the games were also pasted in the scorebook. According to an article printed in December 1910, it was stated that a game between Morton and Mackinaw was Morton's first game as the team had just been organized that fall.

After a game with East Peoria on January 30, 1911, the following article appeared in a newspaper: "East Peoria vs. Morton — A friendly game of basketball was witnessed last evening between the East Peoria and Morton High Schools. Both teams are new in the game, this being the first year for both, but nevertheless each put up a fine struggle for the honor of their home town, which resulted in a score of 28 to 22 in favor of Morton. The Athletic Club of East Peoria has challenged Morton for a game, which will come off a week from next Thursday evening. A date for

the return game with the high school has not been set. It is the desire of the Athletic Club to take a large delegation to Morton with them."

According to the Score Book the return game was played on February 16, 1911. Excerpts from a newspaper article about this game are as follows: "We have met the enemy and we are theirs. The enemy, the East Peoria High School boys, are one of the most gentlemanly bunch of ball players that have graced the town, and altho they beat our aggregation, we cannot help admiring them and wishing them success.

"They came over last Thursday night with some twenty supporters and the article of ball put up was genuine. At the first half, the score was 13 to 7 in Morton's favor. Alas, that unlucky 13, for in the second half came the slaughter of the innocents, and when the smoke of conflict cleared away, East Peoria emerged, smiling with a score of 23 to 21, having hung one on Morton.

"Those who claim to know the game say that the Morton team is woefully out of practice and lack of stamina to play two full halves at top speed, or in other words are quitters in the second half; all of which can be remedied by persistent prac-

... and must be, for the public will only pay good money to see good ball."

In another item it was stated, "The spectators were entirely too noisy at times, but this can be stopped by the referee calling a few fouls on the home team. Remember to treat visitors with as much courtesy as you would expect. The golden rule will apply even to basketball."

Morton did not have a gym in which to play basketball, and the high school team played in the old Morton Hall. This was a frame building and the court was very small, but Morton produced some very fine teams.


On September 30, 1926 at a School Board Meeting, Mr. L. Ross Johnson, the Principal of the high school, suggested that the high school auditorium which also served as a study hall be remodeled so it could be used as a gymnasium. After he had outlined the advantages of this change and the small expense involved, his proposal was approved. A qualified building inspector was then employed to inspect the building to see if it was safe and advisable to use the auditorium as a basketball court. The report was favorable, and work of remodeling started immediately. To protect the players removable screen frames were placed over the radiators and guards were used over the ceiling lights.

Bleachers were placed along the west side of the room to accommodate two hundred spectators. The dressing room facilities and shower baths added to the convenience and advantages of the new arrangement. New baskets with regulation backboards were also installed. All this was a great improvement to what the players had before.

Since the room also served as a study hall something had to be done in order that the desks could be moved in and out of the gym without too much work. The desks were bolted to three inch strips with four desks in a section and after the seats were removed, there was a basketball playing space of thirty by sixty feet.

The N.B.B.O.O. Club was organized about 1921 under the supervision of Miss Opal Cunningham with Miss Catherine Yoder as president of the club. The purpose of this club was to create athletic interest among the girls, and both athletics and outdoor life were encouraged. Each girl strived to gain the greatest number of points by hiking, playing basketball, tennis, etc. in order to earn the letter M. In 1936, G.A.A. was organized and this organization replaced the N.B.B.O.O.

In September of 1930 the Athletic Association was organized with every student becoming a member. Anyone who wished to enter in any interscholastic activity had to be a member of the Athletic Association.



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Instrumental and Vocal Music have long been a part of the Morton High School curriculum. It was in 1930 that Band was introduced with Mr. James Hatcher in charge of it. By the fall of 1950 Morton had a full time music instructor.

Morton was continually growing and by the 1936-1937 school year, Morton Township High School had approximately 150 students and was outgrowing the old building. It was in 1938 that the Citizens of Morton voted in favor of the erection of a gymnasium, four classrooms, a library and a science laboratory to be located next to the original building. Members of the School board at this time were: President, Emery Robison, Secretary, Hugh Phillips, Dr. C.J. Buehler, J.N. Frank, and William Rapp.

Actual construction of the building was started in September 1938, and the building was ready for use in the fall of 1939.

The gymnasium had one of the largest playing floors in this part of the state. It also contained a stage for dramatic productions. It had built in bleachers on the east wall. That year the Tazewell County Tournament was held in Morton for the first time in the history of the school, and Morton was the winner of the tournament.

In the fall of the 1944 school year, Morton had a football team for the first time in the history of the school. A field east and south of the school was rented as a place for the team to play, and later the school board purchased the ground as a permanent athletic field.

In 1950 Driver Training was introduced, but at first no credit was given for the course. Mr. William Turner was the instructor.

By 1952 Morton Township High School had 225 students, and it was during that year that the construction of a new high school was authorized. Mr. William Morton was Principal at this time and board members were Phil Getz, Al Beyr, Homer Oswald, Dr. Cody Cox, Virgil Unks, Clarence Muselman, and Clifford Jibben. The new building was constructed on a 22 acre site on the corner of Illinois and Jackson Streets. East of the building we find the athletic field. In the fall of 1954 students assembled for the first time in the new building. This building had excellent equipment, and Commercial, Agriculture, Shop, Home Economics, Music, Science, and Physical Education equipment had been greatly expanded.

Plans which had been begun by the School Board during the 1956-1957 school year ended with the opening of six new rooms added at the end of the high school building. This was necessary because there had been an increase of 42 per cent in enrollment and 3 per cent in the faculty. The original building had been so constructed that the new



Morton Township High School Ag Class digging potatoes in 1925 that had been planted as a project.

(Picture courtesy of Mrs. Howard Ertmoed)

structure harmonized very well with the original building.

During the 1963-1964 school year a bond issue was passed to put another addition onto the high school. This addition consisted of a new girls' gym, a new cafeteria and several classrooms.

Morton had always been a dual district having a Board of Education for the elementary schools and another for the high schools. During the summer of 1970 Morton voted to form a Unit District with one Board of Education as the head of all levels of schooling in the district.

Members of the first Board of Education for the Unit District were: Dr. James W. Davis, Clyde Ackerman, James Davis, Mrs. Roberta Larson, Dr. Howard Getz, Ken Getz, and Elmer King, Jr. Mr. Joseph Witzig who had been Superintendent of the Morton Community Consolidated School District #644 became Acting Superintendent until a Superintendent of the Morton Unit District #709 was hired. It was early in 1971 that Mr. Wayne Newlin was hired and he started his duties in March of that year. Joseph Witzig was hired as Assistant Superintendent in charge of business and personnel and Dr. Wayne Sutter as Assistant Superintendent in charge of curriculum.

Soon after becoming a Unit District Morton High School again was

faced with the problem of overcrowding. The question was whether to build another high school or add onto the existing one. After much deliberation the decision was made to add to the Morton High School. The addition was completed during the 1976-1977 school year. Now the school has a capacity of 1600 students.

Today Morton High School has approximately 1300 students with 74 teachers plus three Special Education Teachers. The Special Education classes at the high school are for the hard of hearing and impaired hearing. There are seventeen students in these classes. Two students are from Morton and the rest are bussed in.

Morton has branched out in many fields. Today courses are being offered in Agriculture, Art, Business, Driver Education, Foreign Languages, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Language Arts, Mathematics, Music, Health and Physical Education, Science, and Social Studies.

In 1976 the high school athletic field was reorganized in order to be used to better advantage in the various athletic and Physical Education programs. The athletic field has been named the Robert J. Carper Field in honor of Mr. Carper who started teaching at the high school in 1948. He was Assistant

Basketball Coach, Assistant Football Coach, Track Coach and Cross Country Coach. Mr. Carper became Assistant Principal in 1953 and took over the duties of Superintendent of Morton High School in 1954. He retired in 1975.

Morton High School has tried to maintain a balanced and varied program of activities. Besides the Physical Education classes there are many types of sports. For the boys the school offers football, cross country, golf, basketball, wrestling, track, tennis, and baseball. For the girls interested in sports they have tennis, volley ball, bowling, track, soft ball, basketball, and badminton.

When Morton became a Unit District, Groveland became a part of District #709. The seventh and eighth grade students from there entered the Morton Junior High School. Groveland has always sent a number of high school students to school in Morton.

The Groveland Grade School has been in existence for many years. The original building of the present school was built in 1928. This was a two room school until 1955 when an addition of several classrooms was added to the school. About 1964 a gymnasium was added to the building. Today Groveland has eight classrooms. As of February 1, 1977 the enrollment was 226 pupils.

As a result of changing times and new ideas, graduation exercises for eighth grade were held for the last time in the spring of 1971. Since the Morton School System was now a Unit District, it was decided to have

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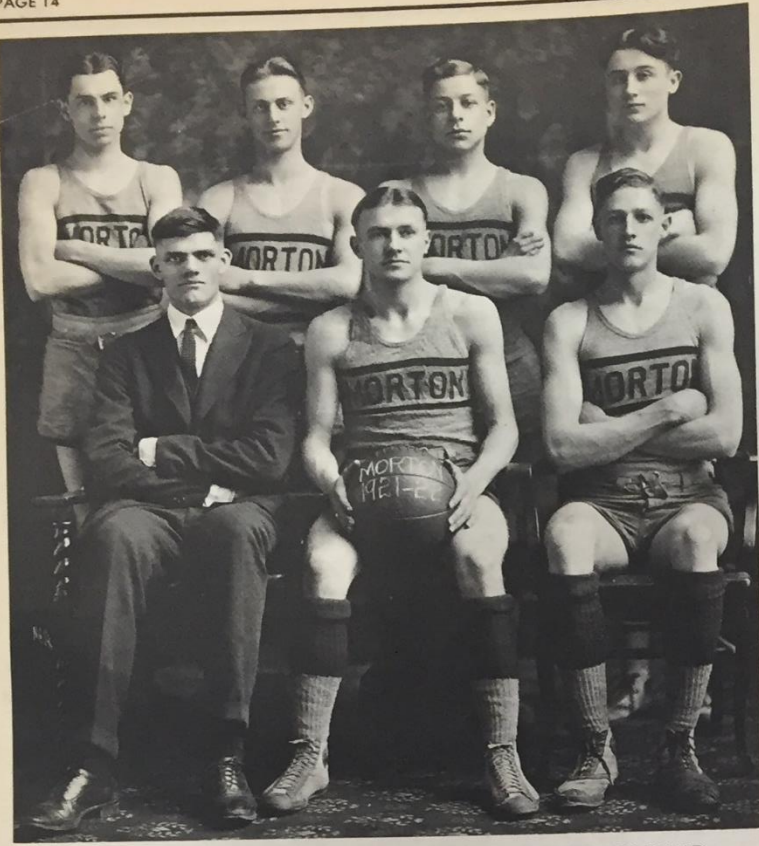


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MORTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP BASKETBALL TEAM 1921-22

First Row: Mr. Schmaelzle (Coach and Principal), Capt. Al B. Carius, Mahlon Eigsti.  
Second Row: Louis McDonald, Clarence Schroen, Benj. Hauter, Ted Fehr.  
(Picture courtesy of Al Carius)

a promotion ceremony rather than graduation exercises for the eighth grade. It was felt that having graduation exercises takes away from the significance of the high school ceremony. According to a newspaper article printed in 1971, the statement was made, "The School Board prefers to regard the completion of the eighth grade as a stepping stone, rather than a milestone. It is a preliminary step in the fulfillment of a goal — not an end of anything."

As Morton grew more and more people of the Catholic faith moved here. On January 1, 1956 the Blessed Sacrament Parish was established in Morton. In March of 1956 construction began on the Blessed Sacrament School.

The school opened in the fall 1958 with 141 pupils. It was staffed with four School Sisters of Notre Dame with Sister Mary Francis Assissi as Principal. By 1961 the school cafeteria was opened.

In 1959 the first lay teacher was hired, and currently the Blessed Sacrament School is staffed entirely with lay people all degreed with Illinois State Certification. For the 1976-1977 school year Charles Fabis was the Principal, Jean Boxwell as the Director of Religious Education, and Fr. Eugene Finnell and Fr. Donald R. Schladen, co-pastors of the parish, are both very active in the religious programs of the school.

Today there are about 184 students attending the Blessed Sacrament School with 10 teachers and the principal teaching half days. Blessed Sacrament School has eight classes — Grade 1 through 8.

By 1976 Morton Unit School District was ready for another elementary school. This school was built on North Morton Avenue in the Hyde Park Addition. The School was completed and turned over to the Morton Unit District on March 9, 1977. The school building has 12 classrooms, a kindergarten room, a music room, and a media center.

This school has been named the Lettie Brown Elementary School after Miss Brown who was a teacher in the Morton area for 50 years. She began her teaching career in the Crandall School about a mile north

of Morton. She taught there for two years and then accepted a position in the Morton Public School, where she taught third grade in her first year. After that she taught the primary class. As mentioned before it was Miss Brown's grandfather who taught in the first school in Morton Township.

Lee Powers who has been teaching social studies and physical education at the Morton Junior High School for the past two years was named principal of the new school.

The first teachers at the Lettie Brown School are as follows: Kindergarten, Ruth Smith; First Grade, Dianne Yordy, Barbara Ort; Second Grade, Barbara Roth, Joyce Jacobson; Third Grade, Janet Lacy, Sandra Long; Fourth Grade, Jan Upper, Jeanette Smith; Fifth Grade, Sally Betterton, Louise Getz; Sixth Grade, JoAnn Balagna, Judith Apici; Music, Karen Nofsinger; Reading, Deborah Diemer; Physical Education, Karlene Peterson; Resource, Donna Stutz, and Speech, Iris Deems.

The three and four year old children have opportunities for education also. There are several classes for children of nursery school age. These classes are not part of the school system. It was about twenty-five years ago that the Bethel Lutheran Church formed a Nursery School. They had classes for 2 six week periods during the school year. Later they lengthened their term to ten weeks and had 2 ten week sessions. This year classes will run full time like the regular school year. They will have both morning and afternoon classes.

In 1970 two other Nursery Schools were opened up in Morton — the ABC Nursery School under the direction of Mrs. Carole Hanlon and Fantasy Land under the direction of Mrs. Kay Frevert. These classes are held in their homes. A third Nursery School was opened in the 1970's by Mrs. Cheryl Lawless but was in session only a few years as the Lawless family moved away from Morton.

The purpose of these Nursery Schools is to help the three and four year olds to become adjusted to the meaning of school before entering

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the public school. It is the first step for a child to acquire development through the efforts of a qualified teacher. The teachers try to teach the children that learning is fun and how to get along with their peers in a structured environment. The Nursery School aims to teach the children to move about the room in a purposeful, orderly manner, to listen attentively, to increase their attention span, to learn to follow directions and to develop a positive attitude toward school.

The History of our Morton Schools has been a history of growth. The elementary school has grown from one building to five elementary buildings for Kindergarten through Sixth Grade. Besides that there are the Junior High School and the High School. As of February 1, 1977 there were 3899 students enrolled in District #709, and with the pupils who are enrolled in the Blessed Sacrament School there are over 4000 students in the area.

The Morton Schools have always been considered very good schools. Although many changes have taken place over the years, Morton has always realized the value of the Basic Subjects.

Statistics are based on Morton Unit District #709 enrollment as of February 1, 1977.



(Picture courtesy of Sam Ackerman)

**Acknowledgments**

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- Don Roth
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**Other Sources**

- Morton High School for the use of the Cauldrons
- Catalog - Morton Public School - 1895
- Mather, The Making of Illinois, Copyr. 1900
- Newspaper Clippings from the Morton News
- Tazewell County News
- A special "thank you" also to the many people who were interviewed.

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