

Sauk County Normal – 100 Years Old

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Feature Writer

Along with permanent settlers in Sauk County from the early to mid nineteenth century came the need for education. Early schools were made of crude log buildings. Teachers were often given positions because of interest, ability, high standards and concern for people. Many students came to school only during the winter months when farm duties were light. Normal schools or teacher training programs first came into the picture in the United State in the late 1830s in Massachusetts because of educational forerunners as Hoarce Mann and gradually spread throughout the country.

The educational institutions were called Normal Schools because their purpose was to teach standards or norms. Many of the Normal Schools today have become known institutions as Sam Houston State University, San Jose State University and Winona State University, which had been the first state run Normal to be opened West of the Mississippi in 1858.

Many people in the Sauk Prairie area have profited from the Sauk County Normal School established by the Sauk County Board in 1905 with a \$5 fee for quarter for non-residents. Reedsburg was chosen for the location because it was the main line for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad and the Spring Green, Loganville, Reedsburg Stage. The Normal School first functioned in high school classrooms with George Snyder as principal and Annie Reynolds as assistant principal. The original school board included James Stone,

George Davies and Paul Conger. The new Normal School was completed in 1911 at a cost of \$25,000.

In 1955 the state legislature changed the name "Normal School" to Sauk County Teachers College thus eliminating the pun, "Normal." In 1969, the Sauk County board passed a resolution to close the SCTC with property reverting to the City of Reedsburg as the deed stated. However, Sauk County has a college today, University of Wisconsin-Baraboo.

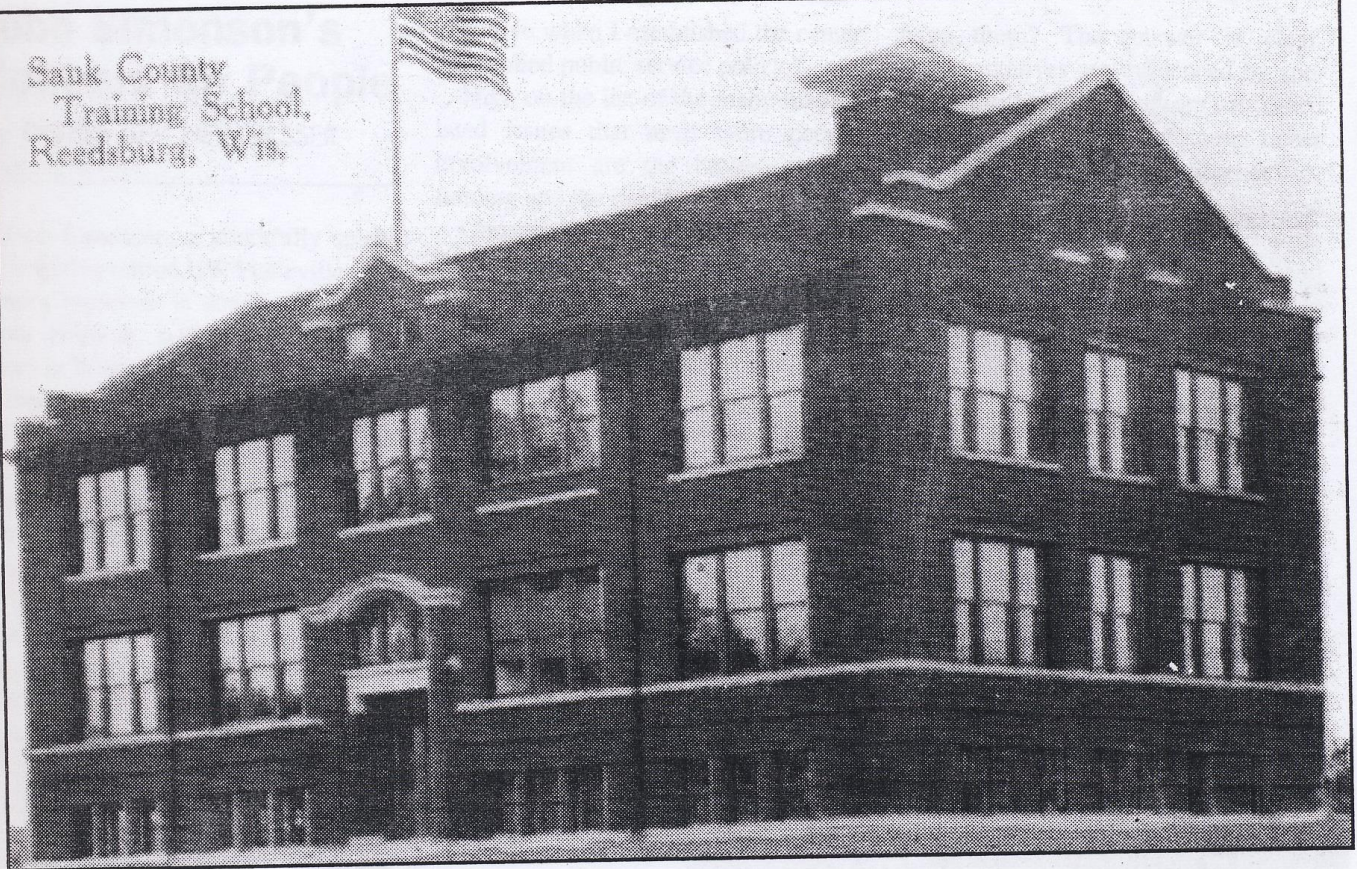
There could hardly have been a greater teacher training school than the normal. There was a classroom of pupils from grades one through four and another with grades 5-8 with practice teaching supervisors in each room to assist the college students with their cadet work. A potential teacher started practice teaching six weeks after beginning their education and this continued until graduation. A small staff of instructors taught subjects on the college level on the upper floor, which also provided a student homeroom assembly and typing room. Drama, sports and chorus were part of the educational program.

There was strict discipline. Here are a few examples taken, along with other excerpts, from the recently published "Sauk County Normal – 100th Year History:" 1872: Teachers each day will fill lamps and clean chimneys. After ten hours of school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.

1896: After school session, wash windows.

1915 (for female teachers): 1. You will not marry during your term of contract. 2. You are not to keep company with men. 3. You must be home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless attending a school function. (for many teachers during that period of time it meant the place in which they acquired room and board in the district in which

Sauk County
Training School,
Reedsburg, Wis.



they taught.) 4. You must not dress in bright colors. You must wear at least two petticoats. 5. Your dress must not be shorter than two inches above the ankle.

The Sauk County Normal provided teachers for most of the rural schools and grade schools in Sauk County. The County Superintendent of Schools also served on the County Fair board and Agricultural Committees, both an integral part of school planning.

Restrictions placed on teachers may seem extreme, but those high morals lingered on through Hubert Theis, the longest President of the Sauk County Normal, 1937-1969, who continued his morning lectures on the importance of teachers having high standard and concern for students individually and as a group. That has rippled into our education system in its modern sense.

The year of 2006 officers of the SCTC Dorothy Coens, Irma Raedel Reimer, Neah Edwards Lohr, Mildred Gudenschwager Lentz and Past President Glen Schulz have compiled a beautiful book on the 100th Anniversary of the Sauk County Normal. Marlene Kindschi Meyer, who had a story written about her and her SCN classmates telling of the dear relationship, with fun and support through the years for the Star stated, "Everyone, who has ever gone to the Reedsburg Normal School has his or her name in the book, here are pictures, stories, statistics and memories."

SCN is the alma mater of yours truly and I came to realize what great educators we have in Sauk County and Wisconsin, in general, when I was teaching overseas with people from all over

the country, though many of them were wonderful, also. We hope to obtain the 100th Anniversary of the Sauk County Normal from our local libraries and the Sauk Prairie Area Historical society. Newly elected officers for the Sauk County Teachers Organization are: Irma Reimer, president; Allegra Zick, vice president; Evelyn Accola, treasurer and Neah Lohr, secretary.

Many of the Sauk County graduates had taught in one-room rural schools or had teaching careers that began there. The first Star stories of interviewed teachers were Alma Deischer, who taught in Black Hawk and Ethel Zick, who taught in Denzer and can be found in the local libraries and the Sauk Prairie Historical Society. Both of the young ladies married local farmers.

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