

The School and Education

The Educational program of Shelbina began in the year 1859, with the opening of a private school in a one-story building, located on West Walnut street, about three blocks west of Center street. There is some evidence that other private schools were opened at later dates, but definite information on them is lacking. The first teacher mentioned was C. M. King.

When a young man 24 years of age, Mr. King found himself working at the carpenter's trade, which he had begun to learn seven years before, and without an education, except that which he had been able to pick up wholly on his own efforts during his leisure time from work. He resolved to secure a liberal education. Being poor, he was compelled to provide for his own support and that of his family as he went along. At the age of 28 he felt qualified to teach school, although he had never been taught himself. He was examined for a license to teach and was awarded the best certificate issued in the county. Having not only made himself proficient in the English branches, he also worked on German and later taught it. For seven years he principally engaged in teaching, and during this time he built up an advanced and flourishing school. His school was noted for the thoroughness of instruction rather than show, characteristic of too many institutions of learning. The following items were taken from files of The Democrat:

July 5, 1871—The select school of Miss Delia Williams closed last week with a thorough exhibit of the studies pursued. Quite a large crowd of parents and interested people attended. Miss Williams will open school again in October and possibly there can be no higher compliment to her ability as a teacher named, than the simple fact that after two years trial, a large school, entirely of females, has already been organized for her next year.

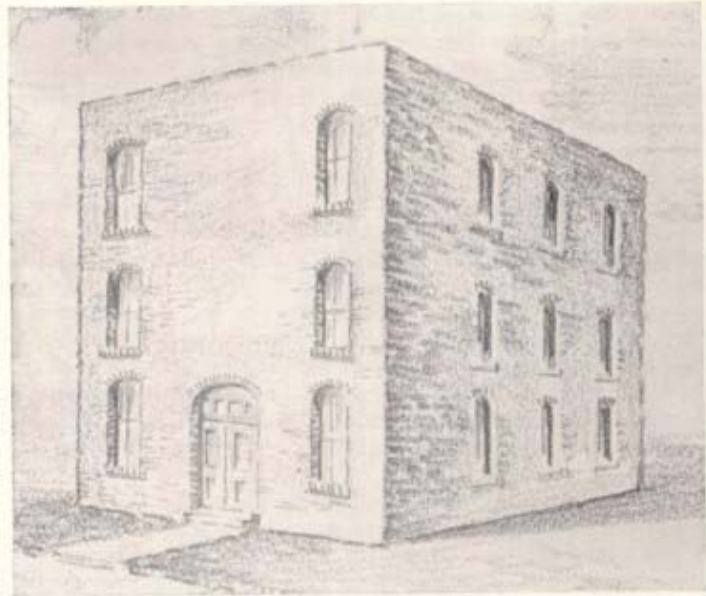
February, 1872—Miss Delia Williams' select school will terminate Friday. She is quitting to go to college.

Other private schools of this period were those of Charles Johnson and Mrs. Victoria Puckett. Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Puckett were also teachers in the public school at a later date.

The private schools and their instructors filled the need of the community until the year 1871, when the Shelbina School District was organized. The first board of directors was composed of Newton Adams, Samuel Williams, C. R. Whitehead, James Norris, Harlow Smith and A. M. Mounce. At a meeting in 1871 it was voted to locate a school on "the Ford lot near the Mill on South Center Street." At this meeting the following resolution was offered by J. W. Schaffer, "Whereas, the best interests of the town of Shelbina demand the construction of a school house, suitable to meet the growing needs of the town; therefore, resolved that we construct a school building in the town of Shelbina, not to exceed in cost the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars." Which resolution was adopted, and on March 18, 1872, J. W. Ford and Sarah C. Ford, his wife, conveyed by Warranty Deed to John F. Benjamin, Daniel Taylor, George T. Hill, Samuel P. Willis, A. M. Mounce and John Dickerson, directors of board of education and their successors, all of Outlot No. 59, in Shelbina, Missouri, for consideration of \$900.00. Classes were being held in an old building and at Smith's Hall, for an enrollment of about one hundred and fifty pupils, prior to the planning of the new building. In January 1872, the following account appeared "the school board met last week and transacted the following business: It employed Prof. J. C. Davis, Principal, at \$80 per month; Miss Levisa Lewis, 1st asst., at \$47.50; Miss Lucy Shackelford, 2nd asst., at \$40; and Miss Kitty Thomas, 3rd asst., at \$32.25. It adopted the following list of books, McGuffie's Series of Readers and Spellers, Ray's System of Mathematics. Rates of tuition for those over 21 or residing outside the district was fixed at the

sum of \$1.50 per month for the primary department and fifty cents additional for each higher department." On March 27, 1872, the following news item appeared "The directors have adopted plans for the public school building, submitted by Mr. Cooper. The general plan of the house will be a square, of about fifty feet each way, and three stories high. It will be commodious and convenient, but may lack in architectural

Only 3-Story School



Shelbina's first public school building erected in 1872-73 has more of a story behind it than is told in the School Section of this history.

With no picture available of Shelbina's first public school building, Fred Naeter of Cape Girardeau, who started in school there, called in a combined architect and construction engineer, and detailed the appearance of the building. A drawing was made which others in Shelbina, old enough to recall the building, say is an exact replica of the 3-story schoolhouse.

The engineer, in business for more than half a century, does not believe that anywhere else was there a 3-story brick school building. He even searched records to try to find one.

The rooms would accommodate 40 pupils each, there were double width desks for two pupils; a stove using 4-foot wood was in the back center of each room which measured 25 feet by 35 feet. The ceiling height was 15 feet.

There were double doors for the entrance, with a hall some 10 feet wide, extending across the building on each floor, and from this a door opening into each room. A spiral stairway climbed from the first to the third floor. The building cost approximately \$10,000.

Each year, according to the recollection of Mr. Naeter, advertisements would be published in each of the newspapers, calling for bids on "100 cords of good wood, 8 feet long, to be delivered at the school house prior to Sept. 1." The usual price paid for wood was \$2.00 per cord. Woodsawyers on their sawbucks were put out of business by a team of horses walking on a treadmill to furnish power for a saw. There was public complaint that such outfits should not be patronized because they were cruel to animals. Eventually a steam engine took the place of the horses on the woodsaw.