

Wichita Public Schools
McCormick School History

Located on the corner of McCormick and Martinson streets, McCormick School is a proud landmark of the community it has served since 1890. It began as a four-room, two-story structure designed by well-known architects, Willis T. Proudfoot and George W. Bird, and was constructed by William Dunscombe. Workmen used block and tackle with chains to lift native limestone from the Middleton quarry of Augusta, KS into place around a brick and wood frame structure.

McCormick was completed in November, 1890 and was the seventeenth elementary school built by the Wichita Public Schools. It was named for its location on McCormick Avenue, after the John McCormick family who were early settlers, and is the only remaining school of eight from the architectural firm of Proudfoot and Bird.

The front entrance is framed by twin towers similar to a castle or fortress, with a stone arch over the main entrance. In the main entrance are two alcoves built into the wall for water buckets and dippers. The stove room was in the dirt floor basement to the south. A dirt wall partitioned off the coal bin. To the north of the building, a shed was provided for horses which some students rode to school.

McCormick opened in the fall of 1890 with 33 students and four teachers: Hattie M. Edgar, May W. Pearce, Laura Laughlin, and Lucy Booth, principal. Jesse Lee Laner was the first custodian.

In 1910, an addition was placed across the back or west side of the building, giving the structure eight rooms, the construction methods and stone matching the original. This addition did not change the front facade.

In 1930, increased enrollment resulted in the construction of a separate building of four classrooms, an auditorium, kitchen and two other rooms suitable for offices and a library. A notable exterior feature which surrounds this "new" brick building is the *Carthalite* frieze made from crushed, colored glass.

Both buildings stood apart until 1951, when a third and final addition joined the two structures with a hallway and restrooms.

Originally the school had a Bangor slate roof which was removed in December 1944 and a composition roof installed.

McCormick School had the distinction of being the only school in town with a bell tower and a large school bell. The bell was rung every morning and every afternoon at the start and close of the school day. The bell tower was removed in the mid 1930s for safety reasons, but the bell remained. On August 9, 1983 - through the efforts of Dr. Alvin Morris, Superintendent of the Wichita Public Schools at the time - a reconstruction of the original 1890 bell tower was raised and set in place.

McCormick School has been a source of pride for many Wichitans and a familiar landmark in southwest Wichita. August 30, 1978 McCormick was accepted by the Wichita Historic Landmark Preservation Committee and the Kansas Historical Society as a local and state historic site and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Due to declining enrollment, McCormick was closed as an attendance center in June 1992. In August of that year, it was reopened as the **McCormick Museum and Science Center**, with Paul Oberg, Supervisor of Museum Programs as the designated building principal.

When Museum Programs was cut from the USD 259 budget in June of 1997, the building was closed and the contents reassessed. In December of that same year, the Wichita Retired Teachers Association voted to accept the challenge of re-opening **McCormick School Museum** as a community service project.

Kansas State Heritage Grants received in 2004 and 2011 repaired the foundation of the limestone building and restored all the windows to their original condition.

Today, the Wichita Association of Retired School Personnel supports a few dedicated volunteers to maintain collections, prepare exhibits, offer tours and provide a public service to all those interested in the history of the Wichita Public Schools.

McCormick Elementary School Principals

1890-91	Lucy Booth
1891-92	Lola Graham
1892-93	Bertha C. Daugherty
1893-98	
1898-99	Anna Leichardt
1899-02	
1902-05	Mary Shaw
1905-06	Agnes C. Blakely
1906-09	Mary McCormick
1909-10	Frankie Hill
1910-12	Clara O. Rebstein
1912-13	Minnie A. Stuckey
1913-17	Gertrude Houseworth
1917-18	Leal D. Berger
1918-48	A. B. Robison
1948-52	Fred W. Doepke
1952-54	Zelma Zimmerman
1954-77	Buel M. Smith
1977-83	Lea Patterson
1983-86	Marjorie Morgan
1986-88	C. Eugene Osborn
1988-90	Curtis LaPorte
1990-92	Janet Jump