

Little Rock School District

History of the Board of Directors

The following is a manuscript that was submitted for an article to be published in the Arkansas Gazette. The manuscript was dated 13 February 1949.

For 80 years Little Rock has had a group of men and women who have served as a School Board for the city. These persons have acted, without pay, as the directing influence in the development of a public school system for Little Rock.

The children of Little Rock, as well as in the rest of the state, attended Common Schools prior to the passage of an act "For the Better Regulation of Public Schools in Cities and Towns" on February 4, 1869. This act brought about the election of a Little Rock School Board of Directors which held its first meeting on February 17, 1869. The members of this first Board were: Benjamin Thomas, President; E.V. Clark, Secretary; M.L. Andrews; E.W. Armstead; Frederick Kramer; and J.R. Montgomery.

According to the provisions of the act the first Board organized and chose officers from their number. Then the members drew lots to determine the length of their term, for Section 2 of the 1869 Act designated the length of a School Board Director's term as three years and also divided the Board into classes, two going out of office every year.

In its early stages the Board met frequently. Since there was no Superintendent the entire first term, the six School Board Directors carried a double responsibility. In March 1869, the second month of its existence, the Board met the 3rd, 6th, 13th, 16th, 23rd and 30th.

There were three standing committees on that first Board: Committee on School Houses and Sites, Committee on Teachers & Schools, and Committee on Finance. In 1884, to the first three was added the Standing Committee on Supplies.

In 1892 a building was erected for the Office of the Superintendent and the meetings of the School Board. That is the present School Administration Building at 800 Louisiana Street. Previous to that time, the Board had met in rented rooms at various places in the town.

During the past 80 years there have been 85 different members giving of time and effort to advance the interest of the schools. Three of those served for over 15 years. The present School Board members are William F. Steinkamp; Werner C. Knoop, H.L. Winburn, E.N. Barron, Gilbert O. Dean and Graham R. Hall.

The man who served longer than any other was Frederick Kramer, President of the School Board for 24 years (1870-1894). When he retired the Board paid him a tribute that is not given to every man, yet which Superintendent H.A. Little feels could be applied to

many other citizens who, during the fourscore years, have directed the destinies of the Little Rock Public Schools:

“He entered upon this work without reward or the hope of reward, other than the consciousness of being engaged in a great and good work for the benefit of his neighbors and his neighbors’ children.”