

Register of Old Buildings  
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 210 W. North Street, Decatur, Illinois.  
E. A. Gastman School.

Date of original construction: Construction began in 1903.  
Dedication was held June 10, 1904.

Name of original owner: Board of Education District #61.

History: The E. A. Gastman School replaced the old "Big Brick" which was torn down. Gastman School was started in 1903. The outside is red portage and Bedford granite brick. The original cost was \$55,000. Other than small repairs for leaks, etc. no remodeling was done. Fire doors were installed in 1967 by state requirement. A prize possession is a Carrara marble fountain, which Mr. Gastman purchased at the St. Louis World's Fair for \$700.00 and presented it to the school in 1905. Gastman School was dedicated June 10, 1904 and opened for school the following September. The fire escape was the only one of its kind in Decatur, being cylindrical in form and resembling a corkscrew.

Gastman School has housed elementary, junior high and high school students.

Their P.T.A. was organized in 1912 through Jane MacMillan's efforts (early teacher and later principal). When the third Mrs. E. A. Gastman died in 1946 at 93, she left \$1500.00 to the school for the Belle Hobbs Gastman Library.

The first school clinic was located in Gastman School.

Mr. E. A. Gastman, for whom the school was named, died August 3, 1907. An editorial appearing in the Decatur Review August 4, 1907, had this to say:

"We have named our finest school building for him. It is spoken of as a monument and it is fitting that it should be so considered. His life has been wrought with our schools and in their records it will be shown to coming generations."

(The above was written and submitted by Mrs. Esther Post, January 24, 1974)

"Real public school history in Decatur began with the passage of the school law, February 15, 1855, which provided for the taxing of all the people of the state for the education of all the children in the state, and required that all districts maintain free schools for at least six months each year. In June of 1855 ground for a school at the corner of Church and North Streets was purchased from Elisha D. Carter and his wife. These were lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Block 8 of Bandy's Addition and the purchasing price was \$800.00.

Present owner's name: Board of Education District #61.

"The new school building known as the "Big Brick" was started the next year by the directors, J. J. Peddicord, E. O. Smith and P. B. Sheppard. On the first floor were two good-sized rooms with recitation rooms adjoining each; on the second floor was one large room and two small recitation rooms. The new building was opened in the fall of 1857 with J. H. Remsburg as principal, and David L. Bunn and Heleh Parsons as teachers. At this time Decatur's population was two thousand, and taxable property was valued at \$445,716.".....

"In 1860 Enoch A. Gastman came from Hudson, Illinois and asked for a job as a school teacher. He was hired as the principal of the primary department of the "Big Brick". The following year he was made head of the high school, then superintendent of schools. His term of service in the latter capacity was the longest in the history of American education, 46 years. At first he received as superintendent \$60.00 a month for a six-month term."

.....  
"In 1903 the old Church Street School or the "Big Brick" was replaced by a new ten-room building costing \$48,839.72. During the time of its construction, pupils attended the Wood Street School in the afternoon. Each morning Miss Dempsey and her children held classes, and at noon the children packed all their books and belongings in school bags and took them home. Then Mrs. Lucy Nelson and pupils from the "Big Brick" moved in for a long afternoon. During the short, winter days, the school day ended long after sundown.

"After the new building was completed, a petition signed by many citizens was presented to the board asking that it be called the E. A. Gastman School. The large piece of statuary in the hall there was purchased by E. A. Gastman after its exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, and was presented to the school by Mr. Gastman as a memorial to his second wife, Mrs. Caroline Sargent Gastman. Mrs. Belle Hobbs Gastman left a memorial fund for a library in the school after her death in 1946.".....

The preceding are excerpts from  
"History of the Decatur Schools"  
by Miss Mildred E. Price

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\* Miss Marion Sligar, present principal of E. A. Gastman School, and Roy O. Schilling, former principal, state that it was always their understanding that the statuary came from the 1903 St. Louis World's Fair.

On October 12, 1904 the Art League commissioned Leonard Crunelle, a Decatur coal miner who became a well-known and highly regarded sculptor, to do a bust of Mr. Gastman. The bust is now---as has always been true----on display at the school that bears his name.

The above two items written and submitted by Charlotte Meyer  
February 1, 1974



Among attachments are the following:

Regarding the SCHOOL -

- Copies of portions of Board of Education minutes, written in Mr. Gastman's own handwriting:
  - Minutes Jan. 15, 1903 -- p. 94 (new building authorized)
  - Feb. 17, 1903 -- p. 98 (Melville Patterson's plans for school approved)
  - April 14, 1903-- p. 101 (new school to be named for E. A. Gastman)
- Decatur Review, Sept. 4, 1904, Fine New School Opens Monday.
- Decatur Mary, Sunday Herald and Review, Dece. 13, 1970, Crunelle and his bust of E. A. Gastman.
- Little Review, edited by E. A. Gastman pupils, Decatur Review, Sat., December 1, 1903.
- First Methodist Buys Gastman, Decatur Review, April 14, 1976.

Regarding Mr. Gastman -

- S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1903, Past and Present of the City of Decatur and Macon County, E. A. Gastman, pp 687-689; also p. 147.
- Decatur Review - February 6, 1937, Otto Kyle column on E. A. Gastman.
- Decatur Review - May 11, 1905, E. A. Gastman New Position (Millikin Board of Managers).
- Chit., Decatur Daily Review, August 4, 1907.



Photos - Geraldine Hodson - 1974

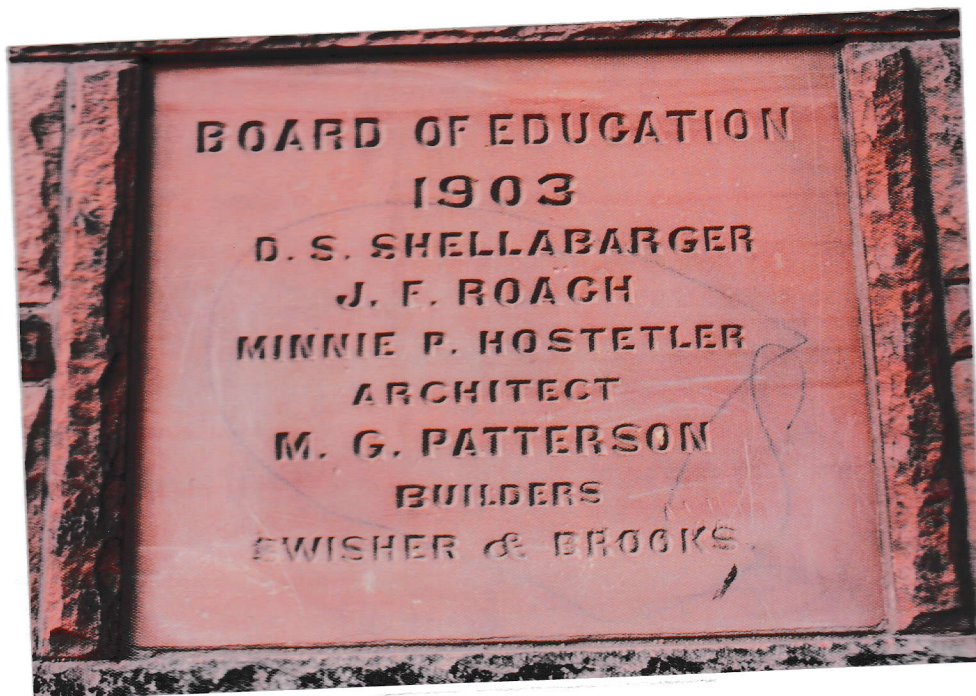
The architecture of this building is very eclectic in that it combines features of many styles, a very common practice during this period. There are Romanesque arches, Queen Anne irregularities and varieties of materials, and Victorian colors. Each gable contains a palladium window and decorative battlements. A great amount of copper is used for decorative as well as useful purposes.



E.A. Gastman School's Two Corner Stones



On the south side of the building --North Street  
Data from the "Big Brick" School



On the east side of the building -- N. Church Street  
Data regarding this building -- Gastman School

210 West North



North Street or South side 1974





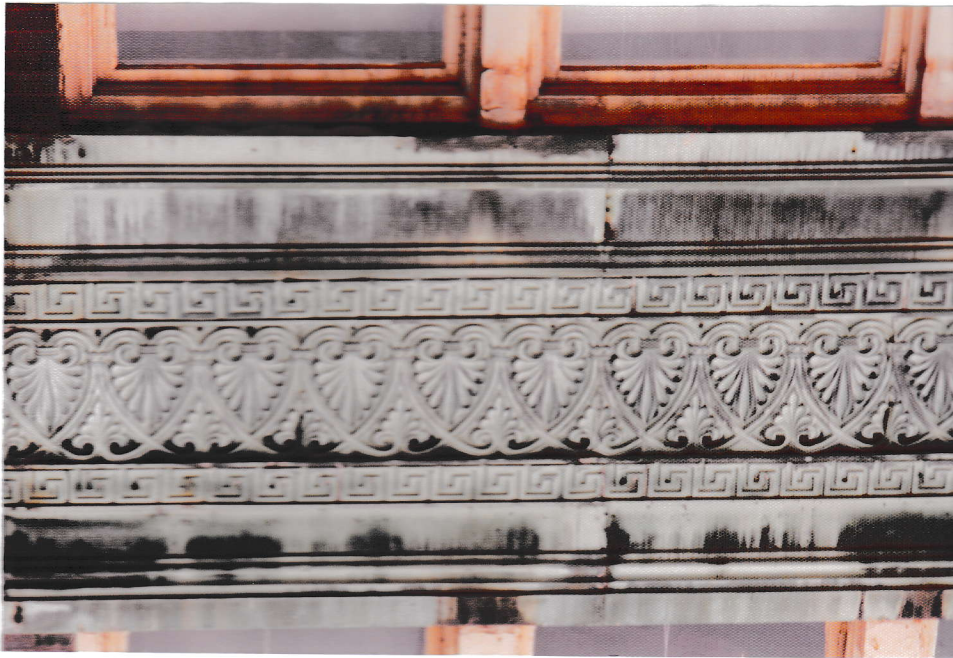


Photo - Geraldine Hodson - March, 1976  
Copper trim - E. A. Galtman School

A description of the E. A. Gastman School as written by Bradford Cantrell, late 1975, follows:

The E. A. Gastman School, designed by M. G. Patterson in 1964, represents a combination of architectural styles of the time. Styles incorporated in the structure, include Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Classical; however, the overall design could be labelled Eclectic.

Romanesque features in the structure are characterized by the connected, arched windows, and gables incorporating turrets, and rough rock faced masonry incorporated in the foundation.

Queen Anne features can be seen in the varied window size, use of several textures and colors.

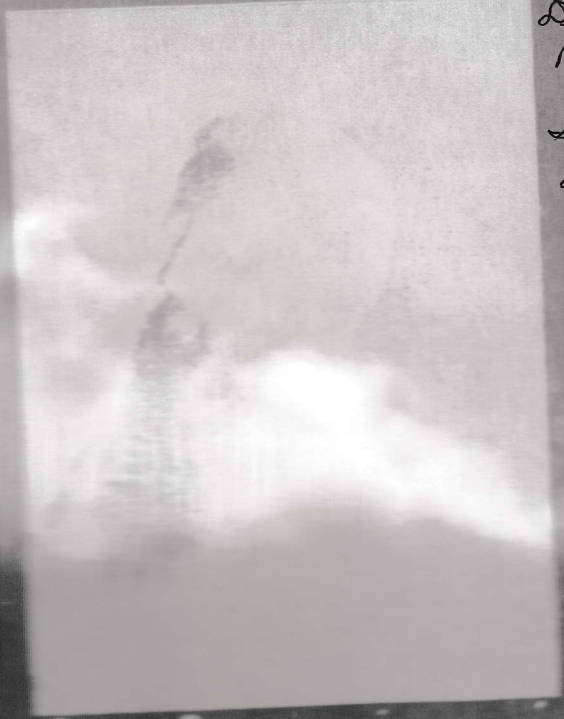
The Classical style is incorporated in its details such as the paladian windows in the dormers, corner pilasters battle-mented castellations, topped entry-way, overall symmetry and keystone first-floor windows.

The overall design can be called Eclectic because it is not true to any one style. It incorporates several styles into a single architectural form which was a common practice in this period.



# Spacious and Happy

# FIVE COMMISSIONS FROM FIVE GOVERNORS



*Decatur  
Review*

*Sun.,  
Dec. 21,  
1902*

**SEPT. E. A. GASTMAN**

Special President State Board of Education.

Mr. Gastman was the first graduate of the State Normal School at Decatur. He was appointed to the position of Special President of the State Board of Education by Governor Palmer. He has served in this position for several years. He is a member of the National Education Association and the American Educational Association. He is also a member of the Decatur Education Association. He is a very capable and efficient administrator. He has been successful in many of his undertakings. He is a very popular and respected member of the community. He is a very capable and efficient administrator. He has been successful in many of his undertakings. He is a very popular and respected member of the community.

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## THIS FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

**T**HE REVIEW has printed nearly a thousand letters from little people declaring their love for Christmas. The little ones have found joy in writing their letters to Santa Claus. They are finding them in The Review. But of the thousands many are found in the newspaper when they climb out of their beds Thursday morning. It was not their little or nothing to write their letters, but it will cost something for Santa to fill even a little portion of their wishes. Something more, we feared, than many parents are able to afford.

There are hundreds of big people in Decatur who have been pleased to see the letters of their cherished darlings in The Review and they will take pleasure in seeing that "Santa Claus" answers the prayers of their own. And it is to these people that this is directed. Santa wants help in answering big thro-

Let yourself feel the joy of giving by sending from among the many appeals one or two from the little ones that you know yourself may not be answered, and playing assistant to Santa Claus.

When your own child is reveling in his wealth of toys and events give yourself the added satisfaction of knowing that the little ones at your part has made a happy little boy or girl. Pick out a letter from a child whose poverty is known to you. Answer that letter at least in a measure and your Christmas will be a happier one.

## LIBRARY CHAIRS

**In Town and Must Go in Cold Storage.**  
The members of the library board were greatly surprised Saturday when they learned that a shipment of new chairs for the new library building had arrived. They hardly expected the chairs so soon and are not ready for them. The chairs will be put in storage and unpacked when the building is finished.

## KEEP ON READING.

**People Do Not Lay Off for the Holidays.**

The patronage at the public library does not seem to be falling off during the holidays. Usually the people do not take out many books during Christmas time and about a week before Christmas the number of books taken out is usually very much less than the ordinary. This year, however, the patronage of the place keeps up and the people seem to be reading just as much as if it were not Christmas time.

## Frank Barrum to Wed.

At Pittsfield, Ills., on Dec. 24, will occur the marriage of Frank Ira Barrum to Dorothy Elizabeth Kendrick, a wealthy and accomplished young lady of that city. The groom is a traveling salesman for the Hirschler Bros. Cigar company, of Pittsfield, and his many friends here join in wishing himself and bride unbounded prosperity and unalloyed happiness. Mr. and Mrs. Barrum will be at home to friends at the St. Nicholas hotel, Decatur, after Jan. 5.



E. A. Gastman School  
210 West North  
1904

The school at the northwest corner of Church and North Streets is intertwined with the history of public schools in Decatur, with the history of the man for whom it was named and with the story of the building, itself, as a monument to that man.

First of all, this was the site of the first public school in Decatur. On February 15, 1855, a state law required that all districts maintain free schools for at least six months each year. Four months later, or in June, 1855, plans were begun for a school building variously called the Big Brick, the Second Ward School, or the Church Street School. It was completed and opened in the fall of 1857 when Decatur's population was two thousand. The Big Brick was used as an elementary school until the fall of 1903 when it was demolished to make way for the present structure. For one year (1862-63) it also housed Decatur's high school in one first floor room. Mrs. Lucy H. Nelson, the last principal of the Big Brick, arranged for its pupils to attend afternoon sessions at the old Wood Street School, a predecessor of Mary W. French School, until the new building was ready for occupancy in September, 1904.

The man for whom the new building was named had come to Decatur three years after the Big Brick opened. He taught third grade and was head of the primary department in the fall of 1860. He subsequently became principal of the high school (in the Big Brick), serving as superintendent of schools at the same time. He went on to serve one community as superintendent for more <sup>years</sup> than any other person in the nation, save one, or for forty-five years, 1862-1907.

On October 5, 1857, when Illinois State University, then Illinois Normal University, first opened its doors, Enoch A. Gastman who had already spent one term each at Eureka College and Illinois Wesleyan, was the first student to enroll. A Normal anniversary year book later recalled this first student in 1857 as "a tall, red-haired, bony young farmer from Hudson, Illinois, who rode down to Normal on a load of potatoes". Three years later he became salutatorian of Normal's first graduating class. Later still he would serve over forty years on the state board of education which managed the affairs of this same normal university, serving as president of the board for several years. A news item in the May 11, 1905, Decatur Review referred to an additional title of Mr. Gastman's, that of president of the board of managers of James Millikin University, this in accordance with Mr. Millikin's wishes. Mr. Gastman also served for many years on the board of the National Education Association, becoming nationally known as an educator, while also keeping informed on educational trends.

Miss May Boland, a former principal of Riverside, Oakland and Mary W. French Schools, who graduated from Decatur High School while Mr. Gastman was superintendent, and who later was employed by him, recalls in 1976 at age ninety-two that Mr. Gastman was a very capable executive, in touch with every detail and as a man extremely fair and dependable. His enthusiasm and his spirit that promised something better for pupils were an inspiration to the staff, all of whom were well-known to him. Children enjoyed his visits to classrooms. She recalls his having pulled a frog from his pocket on one occasion much to the students' delight, and engaging them in discussion of it. Physically, she says he was a very big man with a flowing beard which when she knew him gave no evidence of ever having been red. She does not recall his having walked with a limp, but many accounts refer to an early accident while splitting rails. The axe slipped, injuring an ankle quite badly. This is said to have influenced his giving up farming to become a teacher, fearing he would never be strong enough for heavy, physical labor; however, gardening remained a favorite hobby throughout life.

*Copy from Places and People in Decatur, 1900-1929.*



Minutes of a special Decatur board of education meeting, written by Mr. Gastman as a clerk of the board in his own longhand - as were all of the minutes during his superintendency - show that on January 15, 1903, the three board members, D. S. Shellabarger, Mrs. Minnie P. Hostetler and James F. Roach, voted unanimously that a building of two stories and basement, with an attic of sufficient size to be used as an auditorium to seat not less than six hundred persons, be built on the site of the Church Street School. At subsequent meetings, Melville Patterson of Decatur was named architect, with the local firm of Brooks and Swisher as contractors. The final bid called for an exterior of pressed bricks with basement story and two entrances of Portage stone, and with Bedford stone used for sills, lintels and trimming on the other stories. The final cost of the building, with copper gutters and copper decorative detail, concrete school yard, walks and furnishings, came to about \$54,000, making it the finest school building in Decatur.

On April 14, 1903, the board minutes record "the new school building at the corner of Church and North Streets should be known as the E. A. Gastman School, in honor of the man who had served almost a lifetime in the public schools of this city and is now teaching the third generation that has attended the public schools since he became identified with them. It is a fitting compliment, and while the good work he has done will be the most enduring monument that could be erected to his memory, the name of the building will be there lest we forget".

The E. A. Gastman School was dedicated September 3, 1904, a ten-room building, with two additional basement rooms, and third-floor auditorium with lofty, arched ceiling. Mr. Gastman purchased a large piece of statuary, a fountain of Carara marble, after its exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1903. This was placed in the first floor hallway in memory of Caroline Sargent Gastman, his second wife, originally from New Hampshire, whom he had met as a fellow teacher in Decatur. She had died in April, 1904, five months before this school was dedicated. Two of their five children survived her.

Another important piece of statuary, at first housed in the high school and later at Mr. Gastman's request in the school named for him, was a bust of Mr. Gastman done by Leonard Crunelle, the young coal miner from Decatur who became a famous sculptor following study with Lorado Taft. The bust, commissioned by the Art League of Decatur, was later cast in bronze with contributions of one to ten cents each by Decatur teachers and pupils, the work being done by a Chicago artist under the direction of Mr. Crunelle.

In the spring of 1907, Mr. Gastman tendered his resignation. He had done so several times previously, but each time he had been persuaded to stay on. Now, however, at age seventy-three, Mr. Gastman was determined to retire. After making his last public appearance as superintendent at the 1907 high school commencement exercises where he introduced his successor, H. B. Wilson, and after completing the high school yearbook and all state reports, Mr. Gastman and his third wife of three years, who had been Miss Belle Hobbs of Bloomington, left in mid-July for retirement vacation in a favorite state, New Hampshire. Two weeks later when they had traveled on to Boston, Mr. Gastman died suddenly of bronchitis, this occurring in Boston's Parker House Hotel on August 3, 1907. News items commented that death came just at the time that his life's work came to a close.

In the autumn of 1975, E. A. Gastman School pupils were transferred to an enlarged Mary W. French School, and the abandoned E. A. Gastman School was advertised for sale, price \$195,000. The Carara marble sculpture, the Caroline Sargent Gastman memorial, was placed in Mary W. French School, and the Crunelle bust of Mr. Gastman in the Macon County Historical Museum.



Deeatur Board of Education minutes  
January 15, 1903  
p. 94 B. Ed. Minutes  
July 1, 1898-  
June 23, 1912

1903  
**A NEW BUILDING**

*Korrald-Jan 16-*

The Board of Education Ask Architects  
To Submit Competitive Sketches  
for New School Building.

WILL COST AT LEAST \$40,000.

The Sketches Must be Submitted by  
January 24.

At a special meeting of the board of  
education held on Thursday afternoon  
the following resolution was passed by  
a unanimous vote.

Resolved, that we erect on the pres-  
ent Church street school ground a  
school house containing ten or eleven  
rooms. Building to be two stories with  
basement, with an attic of sufficient  
size to be used as an auditorium, to  
seat not less than 600 persons, and that  
we will receive from various architects  
sketches for floor plans and elevation  
to be used as a basis for final plans to  
be adopted later on.

Last night D. S. Shellabarger, pres-  
ident of the board of education, said  
that the board had determined to erect  
a new building as soon as possible. The  
competitive sketches submitted by  
architects must be in the hands of the  
board of education by January 24.  
Once that the contract for making the  
plans and specifications is let the board  
will rush preliminaries in order to  
reach the point where the contract for  
the construction may be let.

Mr. Shellabarger said that the deci-  
sion as to ten or eleven rooms would  
depend of course upon the most con-  
venient arrangement made by the  
architect and was a point on which  
there is now no difference of opinion.  
The architects will be asked first for  
mere sketch suggestions and when a  
selection has been made, the in-  
structions will be for a structure to  
cost not less than \$40,000 nor more  
than \$45,000.

If the plans can be made and the  
contract awarded before the time for  
school to close in the spring, the pres-  
ent Church street building will be vac-  
ated and torn down in order that  
work on the new structure may be  
commenced. In such case the pupils  
of the Church street building would  
probably attend school for half a day  
at the Wood street building and the  
regular pupils there would be given  
half a day's time there. By that plan  
all of the pupils could have their rec-  
itations and while it would not be the  
most convenient arrangement they  
would not lose any time.

The possibility of getting more  
ground at the Church street site is not  
encouraging and in all probability the  
new and larger building will have  
nothing more than the present site for  
its accommodation. The contract  
will be awarded with the idea that  
the building must be completed by the  
time the fall term begins in September.

*Church St School*

Deeatur, Illinois, Jan  
sk P. M. as per adyrummer  
ie P. Kooetter; Inepis David  
nd the Clerk, Enoch A Gast

*Coach offered the follow  
ted by a unanimous vote*

*we erect, on the pres*

*a school house conta*

*ms. The building to b*

*ement, and an attic*

*ed as an auditorium*

*, than 600 persons,*

*rom various archite*

*ns and elevation*

*for final plans to*

*The said sketches*

*board by the 24th*



Decatur, Illinois, February  
February 17, 1903

Members

Present: Mrs. Minnie P. Hostetter; Messrs. Da  
Shellabarger, James H. Roach, and the clerk  
W.A. Gastman -

Coal

The bill of Harry E. Kizer & Co. for coal  
owed and the clerk was directed to issue  
for \$476.93 on the treasurer to pay the same.

Duplicate orders.

The president and clerk were directed to  
duplicates for the following orders:

Number 7364 to Katherine Search for
" 7367 " Nettie C. Patchett "
" 7370 " Silva Ross "
" 7372 " Eva M. Birby "
" 7412 " Dempsey H. Conway "

These orders were lost by the messengers  
to take them from the office to the Pugh school  
ary 30, 1903. This is the first time that such  
cident ever happened.



New School

The discussion of the plans for the new

new Church street school was used

and at 11:40 those submitted by

Melville  
architect

G. Patterson were accepted.

\*

On motion, adjourned.



# AWARD CONTRACT

April 15, 1903

Brooks & Swisher of Decatur Were  
the Successful Bidders for the  
Erection of  
**Revised**  
THE E. A. GASTMAN SCHOOL

The Board of Education Held a Long  
Session Tuesday Night.

The board of education held a meeting last night and decided two important questions. First that the new school building on Church street should be known as The E. A. Gastman School, in honor of the man who has served almost a life time in the public schools of this city and is now teaching the third generation that has attended the public schools since he became identified with them. It is a fitting compliment and while the good work that he has done will be the most enduring monument that could be erected to his memory, the name on the building will be there lest we forget.

It was nearly midnight when the board adjourned and made the announcement that the contract had been awarded to Brooks & Swisher. The statement was made that no information concerning the figures in any of the bids would be given out until after the contract had been signed and a statement given by the contractors. A further statement was made that on one occasion the board had at least been greatly annoyed by haste in publishing bids and a precaution would this time be taken against such a mistake. None of the bids last night included the heating, plumbing, wiring for electric lights or the concrete floors in the basement. The specifications provided that all of that should come at another time. The specifications provided that several kind of stone and brick might be used and the contractors as a result each had several sets of figures. The bid finally accepted provides that the building shall be of pressed brick. This style is a gray mottled brick made by the Columbus, Ohio, Pressed Brick and Terra Cotta Co. The trimmings are to be of Portage red sandstone and the roof of gray slate.

The other bidders were F. M. Gerthwait of Chicago; L. S. Baker of Decatur; H. B. Walters of Danville; Bartlett & Kling of Galesburg; H. H. Tobias & Son, of Assumption; F. H. Jahr of Champaign.

The Routine.  
In addition to letting the contract for the erection of the new building the board disposed of some routine business, allowing bills, etc. The report of that proceeding follows:

The report of the treasurer, K. H. [Name], for the month of March was compared and approved.

The superintendent's report of the receipts and expenditures of the tuition fund for the month of March was compared and accepted.

The following bills were allowed and the clerk was directed to draw orders on the treasurer to pay the same:  
Harry E. Kizer & Co. \$145.10  
Byrd L. Davis 2.25

Decatur, Illinois, April 14, 1903  
Mrs. Minnie P. Hostetter; Treas. David S. Shelton; James W. Roach, and the clerk, E. A. Gustman. The minutes of the meetings held January 26, February 2, 17, and March 10, and 18 were read and approved.

The report of the treasurer, R. H. Roby, for the month of March was read, compared, and approved. The report of the receipts and expenditures of the month of March was examined and approved. The following bills were allowed and the clerk was directed to pay the same:

- E. Kizer & Co. \$548.10; Byrd L. Davis, 2.25
- Wells Co. 29.52; Decatur Plumbing & Heating Co. 17.50
- School Ink Co. 17.50; Central Union Telephone Co. 6.25
- W. B. & Martin Co. 6.25; Caxton Co. 1.00
- W. H. Dressing Co. 1.00; Nellie Glesener, 23.50
- W. H. Moore 23.50; C. P. Lesh Paper Co. 7.50
- Standard Oil Co. 7.50; Review Publishing Co. 5.50
- W. H. Ehrhardt 5.50; William Groves, 6.59
- W. H. & Electric Co. 6.59; City of Decatur, 1.10
- W. H. Bros. 1.10; Herald Printing & Stat. Co.

By a unanimous vote of the board, it was ordered that the new building to be erected at the corner of Church and [Name] streets be known as the E. A. Gastman School.

The following bids were submitted for erecting the building in place of the present Church St. School:

Shurtz & Brooks: With <sup>wood</sup> stairs, Buff Bedford stone facing brick for the sum of \$4100



Present: Mrs. Minnie W. Roswell, Superintendent  
Shellabarger, James W. Rouch, and the Clerk, W. Gastman.

The following letter was read:

Urbana, Illinois, April 20, 1905

"Mr. Ed. Gastman, Decatur, Ill.

Dear Sir:-

Yours of April 17 has just been received and I have talked over the matter with Prof. Whilt. We have no sample bricks made by the Columbus Brick and Terra Cotta Co., but have most of the color made by the Illinois Hydraulic Pressed Brick Company. If you will mail us a chip or small sample of the selected brick so as to give us the color, we shall be able to try the effect with Portage and Bedford stone and can then give a more definite opinion. But on general principles, we believe that you would get the best effect by using Portage stone for the basement story and the two entrances, then using Bedford stone for sills, lintels and other trimming in the other stories provided that the actual color of the bricks harmonizes well with it."

Very truly yours,

N. Clifford Ricker,

Dean of the College of Engineering

On motion, it was ordered that the basement story and the two entrances be of Portage stone and that Bedford stone be used in the rest of the building.

On motion, adjourned.

W. Gastman, Clerk

from  
city of Ill.

→

→

Portage  
and  
stone

# Sculptor Got Start in Decatur

By James M. Dodman

Leonard Crunelle, world-famous sculptor who died in 1944 at age 72, got his start in art in Decatur.

He was born in 1872 at Lens, Pas-de-Calais, France. When he was 17, his parents came to America and settled in Indiana.

His father was a miner, and Leonard followed in his footsteps as a miner's helper.

They sought work in Pana and finally came to Decatur. His father applied for work at the Decatur Coal Co. and was turned away.

The family started walking down the Illinois Central Railroad tracks.

When Mark Moran, superintendent of Mine 1, heard about the plight of the family, he sent for them and had them called back to Decatur where he found lodging for them and finally hired the father and young Leonard.

Leonard worked in the mines during the day and spent his evenings sketching with crayons on crude brown paper.

He was a quiet and retiring youth but seemed to make friends easily.

Mrs. Anna Waughop saw some of Leonard's sketches and realized the youth had talent. She arranged for him to take art lessons from a Laura Johns, a Decatur artist.

In the meantime, Leonard tried his hand at clay modeling. He brought up clay from the mine and washed it until it was free of coal dust.

Leonard was a friend of young James J. Moran, the son of the mine superintendent, who later founded the James J. Moran & Sons Funeral Home. The first bust Crunelle made was of his friend, "Jimmy."

When Crunelle was 19, the Decatur Woman's Club invited a well-known Chicago artist, Lorado Taft, to give a lecture and a demonstration of clay modeling for the club.

Mrs. Elmira Storer, wife of Dr. A. J. Storer, had learned of Leonard's talent as an artist and personally carried a ticket to the young man so that he could attend the lecture.

After the lecture, Crunelle was introduced to Taft and showed him some of his sketches.

Taft was so impressed with the young man that he offered to take him to Chicago to assist him in his work.

Taft was working on plans for the World's Columbian Exposit-

Sunday Decatur Herald  
and Review

## Decatur

### Diary

December 13, 1970.

tion that was to open in May, 1893, so a whole new world opened to Crunelle. As Taft's helper, he was able to learn more about sculptures.

It was during this time that he married the adopted daughter of the woman who encouraged him to take art lessons, Augusta Waughop.

It was not until 1895, that he seriously considered doing something of his own.

He did a bust of his 1-year-old daughter which he entitled "Little Marguerite."

It took Chicago art critics by storm and was sent to other parts of the country where it won acclaim for the young artist.

The statue of Sacagawea, Indian girl who guided Lewis and Clark, was done by Crunelle and

erected on the capitol grounds at Bismarck, N.D., in 1906.

The "Fairy Fountain" or "Design for a Fountain" won a \$100 prize for Crunelle offered by Montgomery, Ward & Co. in 1907 at the Art Institute in Chicago. It consisted of a group of his four children with the elder daughter as the central figure.

Crunelle has done a number of famous statues. Gen. Artemas Ward in Washington, D.C., Lincoln statues in Springfield, Dixon and Freeport, the statue of Gov. Richard Oglesby in Lincoln Park, Chicago, and of Gov. John M. Palmer in Springfield are a few of his works.

A monument 22-feet high to Negro soldiers of Illinois, placed at 35th St. and Grand Blvd. in Chicago is one of his larger works.

In Decatur, Mary W. French School has a relief, the Marian L. Dill Memorial, and the Decatur Public Library has an early bust of Dr. W. A. Barnes and E. A. Gastman. Gastman School also has a bust of Gastman done by Crunelle.



Education means training. An educated person is a trained person—a person prepared for life.

# LITTLE REVIEW

Girls and boys are the hope of America. Let them be clean, keep their bodies clean, their minds alert, and their hearts big.

VOL. VII., NO. 7.

Edited by Pupils of E. A. Gastman School.

Saturday, Dec. 1, 1923.

## Bronze Bust of E. A. Gastman

### Story of Work Told By Mrs. Nelson.

Mr. E. A. Gastman was born in New York, June 15, 1834. He was superintendent of the Decatur schools for forty years. He was loved and respected by all of his associates, and for this reason Mr. Shepherd, principal of the High School at that time, first conceived the thought of having a permanent memorial of Mr. Gastman.

The bust of Mr. Gastman was made by Mr. Leonard Cross. It was sold for by the teachers of the High School and grade school.

Mrs. Nelson was principal of Gastman school and at Mr. Cross's request Mrs. Nelson made the bust.

At the time of the bust the school was in the hands of the State. At the time of the bust the school was in the hands of the State.

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## SCENE AT E. A. GASTMAN SCHOOL



Children at Work.

This shows the free activity period in the primary grade at E. A. Gastman school. The pupils are allowed to choose the materials and the books with which they wish to work.

## WHY WE SHOULD SAVE MONEY

Do you know what to do with a quarter of a dollar or more? Do you know what to do with a whole dollar without your mother's help? Do you know what to do with a five dollar bill?

At the end of 1 year, \$1.00 will grow to \$1.08 or \$1.10. At the end of 2 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$1.16 or \$1.20. At the end of 3 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$1.26 or \$1.30. At the end of 4 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$1.36 or \$1.40. At the end of 5 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$1.46 or \$1.50.

At the end of 10 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$2.10 or \$2.20. At the end of 15 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$2.40 or \$2.50. At the end of 20 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$2.70 or \$2.80.

At the end of 25 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$3.00 or \$3.10. At the end of 30 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$3.30 or \$3.40. At the end of 35 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$3.60 or \$3.70.

At the end of 40 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$3.90 or \$4.00. At the end of 45 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$4.20 or \$4.30. At the end of 50 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$4.50 or \$4.60.

At the end of 55 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$4.80 or \$4.90. At the end of 60 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$5.10 or \$5.20. At the end of 65 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$5.40 or \$5.50.

At the end of 70 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$5.70 or \$5.80. At the end of 75 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$6.00 or \$6.10. At the end of 80 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$6.30 or \$6.40.

At the end of 85 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$6.60 or \$6.70. At the end of 90 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$6.90 or \$7.00. At the end of 95 years, \$1.00 will grow to \$7.20 or \$7.30.

money when your parents get old and need your help. And when you yourselves grow old and cannot work any longer, you will need enough money to live upon the rest of your lives. And you should remember, use the pleasure that comes from being able to help others. How often have you regretted that you could give so little to some good cause?

Some people do not save money regularly and when they become old they find themselves dependent upon relatives for support. Unfortunates, there are a great many such people. It is said that only 3 per cent out of every 100 have saved money enough by the time they get to be 65 years old to support themselves independently for the rest of their lives. What a pity this is—to think 97 out of 100 would be in great want unless some son or daughter or relative, or the public supported them. The reason I want to tell you about this wonderful method of making money grow is to enable you to take pride in planning right now so that when you are old you will have saved enough to take care of yourselves for the rest of your lives. Let me remind you again that the chief reason for saving is to have enough money to use at some future time when a great need for money may suddenly arise.—C. R. Upton, Teachers' College, Columbia University.

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## Study Health, Beauty, Wealth

"First comes health," says an old Greek proverb, "second personal beauty, then wealth honestly comes by."

In E. A. Gastman school we are taught from the first grade up that first and most important of all blessings is health. It like everything else must be earned. And we must know how to earn it.

We are now all learning through our hygiene lessons how this can be done. Even in the first grade the tiny tots are finding out how important it is. Last week they had a tooth brush parade in which they marched and sang their little song which tells what a good friend of ours the tooth brush really is. On up through the second and third grades the children have learned the valuable health rhymes from the beautiful new posters which our Mothers' club purchased for us this year—the rhymes which tell us of the wonders that good fresh air, exercise, and plenty of sleep will do for us. Then as we become farther advanced in our work we find out how to avoid contagious diseases, how to form correct habits in standing and sitting in order that our bones shall grow in their proper shape. We are learning the necessity of well balanced meals and how a good, wholesome breakfast will give us a start for our day's work.

And second comes personal beauty—the beauty of a clean, healthy body, the beauty of well kept hair, the beauty of clean white teeth and the beauty of clean and appropriate dress. But without health there can be no beauty.

"Then," says the old Greek proverb, "wealth honestly comes by." We are all planning and hoping for the privilege of a college education when we are through with our grammar and high school work. We know that we must save our dimes in order to go on with our plans. And are we doing it? Yes, in E. A. Gastman school one hundred eighteen children have bank accounts, twenty own Thrift Stamps, twenty-nine own Liberty bonds and three have loan stocks.

Surely as a school we are following the Greek proverb, and we know that the old Greeks were wise.—Janice Barrum.

E. A. Gastman,  
How I love dear E. A. Gastman,  
How I love to see her shine,  
Then when I go to Roosevelt,  
For her I'll surely pine.

—Wilma Finkbeiner

E. A. Gastman,  
How I love dear E. A. Gastman,  
How I love to see her shine,  
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—Janice Barrum



The superintendent was directed, August 21, 1902, to post notices in all the school rooms that persons damaging the property of the district would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

On September 9, 1902, the superintendent reported that the 6th and 7th grades in the Marietta and the Warren street schools were greatly crowded and that the same rooms in the H. B. Durfee school were not full. He was ordered to transfer pupils living on or east of Morgan street to the H. B. Durfee school and to transfer enough pupils living east of North Edward street and north of West Edmond street to the Warren street school to equalize, as nearly as may be, the number of pupils in the sixth and seventh grades of the Marietta and the Warren street schools.

Messrs. Goodman and Maynard petitioned the circuit court for a writ of mandamus to compel the board to allow their children to remain in the Warren street school. The case never was heard by the court. Something over a year later the petition was dismissed by the complainants.

In December, 1902, a discussion was commenced as to the desirability of tearing down the Church street school, the oldest public school in the city, and building a larger and better edifice. On January 15, 1903, the following was offered by Mr. James F. Roach and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That we erect on the present Church street school ground a school house containing ten or eleven rooms. The building to be two stories with a basement, and an attic of sufficient size to be used as an auditorium, to seat not less than 600 persons, and that we receive from various architects sketches for floor plans and elevations to be used as a basis for final plans to be adopted later.

At a meeting January 26, 1903, sketches were received from architects.

Some six or eight meetings were held to

consider these sketches and the discussions were frequently continued until nearly midnight. Finally the plans of M. G. Patterson were adopted at 11:40 p. m., February 17, 1903. He was elected superintendent of construction March 18. On April 14, 1903, by a unanimous vote, it was ordered that the building be named the E. A. Gastman School.

The contract was awarded to Swisher & Brooks for \$42,448.88, but this amount does not include the heating and ventilating, the gas pipes, the electric wiring nor the concrete floors in the basement. It is estimated that the total cost will be some fifty-five or sixty thousand dollars.

On April 15, 1903, R. O. Rosen was directed to prepare plans for an addition of two rooms to be built on the south end of the Jackson street school. He was directed to provide for using as much of the old material from the Church street house as could be utilized. Bids were invited for tearing down the old Church street school.

At a meeting held April 24, 1903, a contract was made with Messrs. Swisher & Brooks to tear down the old building, as no bids had been received to do it. They commenced the work the next day, and the total cost was \$965.98. Old material was sold to the amount of \$180.40.

The Church street school building was the oldest public school house in the city. It was erected in 1856-7 by the directors, Edward O. Smith, Jasper J. Pedicord, and Philip B. Shepherd. An addition of two rooms was made to it in 1879. No record of the cost of the original house has been found, but tradition says it was about \$6,000. The addition cost \$2,883.75.

On July 8, 1903, the contract for building an addition of two rooms to the Jackson street school was awarded to Wm. F. Gebhart for \$8,547.

At a meeting held on July 14, 1903, it was ordered that the Ward system of teach-

*Past and Present in Decatur and Macon County, Illinois,  
S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1903, p. 147*



# THE NEW SCHOOL OPENS ON MONDAY

Sept. 4, 1904 - Decatur Review

With All New Equipment  
Cost About \$54,000.

## TERRITORY LAID OUT.

### Sketch of the Man in Charge of the Building.

The new E. A. Gastman school, which will be thrown open for public inspection Monday afternoon from 2 to 5 o'clock and in the evening from 7 to 9 o'clock is the largest and handsomest school building in the city, cost more than any other, and in reality is one of the best school buildings to be found in the state. It cost almost as much as the high school and will be ample for the needs of its territory for many years to come.

#### COST.

The contract price of the school building was \$42,665.85, but that does not represent its entire cost by a great deal. There are the sidewalks, concreting of the yard, the wiring, the furniture, the heating, the chairs, the fire escape and probably several other items of expense to be credited to, and it is thought that the grand total will be close to \$54,000. The concrete work on the third cost about \$1,000. It cost \$1 each a foot, and the bill has not yet been presented.

#### ROOMS.

There are eleven fine large school rooms in the building, besides two offices, the assembly room with its four ante-rooms, large closets for each room, study corridors, etc. Besides all these, there are two fine large front rooms in the basement that are the equal of any school rooms in the city and can be used as such if occasion requires.

#### ASSEMBLY HALL.

The assembly hall on the upper floor, with its lofty arched ceiling and walls of spotless white, is one of the handsomest rooms to be found anywhere. There is a large stage at the west end, with dressing rooms on each side, and on the floor are 425 opera chairs. These chairs do not represent the full seating capacity of the hall. That many chairs were provided because it will not be often that more than that number will be needed, but 100 or 200 more people could find room in the hall without being uncomfortably crowded.

#### TIME OF BUILDING.

The work of tearing down the old Church street school was begun in May, 1903, and the actual work on the new school started in July of that year. The pupils will start to school in the new building Tuesday morning. During the past year they have been attending the Wood street school.

#### TERRITORY.

While there are no district boundaries for the Decatur schools, the superintendent and board of education have agreed that pupils shall attend the E. A. Gastman school from the territory bounded by the Wabash on the north, the Illinois Central railroad on the east, William street on the south



NEW E. A. GASTMAN SCHOOL.

One of Handsomest Buildings in the State to Be Thrown Open Tomorrow.



—Photo by VanDeventer.  
**CHARLES T. COLLINS,**  
Janitor of the New E. A. Gastman School.

the southern limit as far east as Water street. East of that it will probably be necessary to include some territory further south.

The final distribution of pupils among the various schools cannot be made till after the opening of the schools. There is always a good deal of changing to be done in order to equalize the attendance in the various schools.

#### THE JANITOR

Selected Because of His Good Work at Another Building.

Charles T. Collins, formerly janitor at the H. B. Durfee school, has been appointed janitor of the new E. A. Gastman school. He was the first to suggest the name for the new school house. He made his suggestion through the newspapers and later passed a petition that was signed by the largest

glad that a worthy man didn't have to die before a monument was erected in recognition of his life's earnest work in the cause of education.

Charles T. Collins was born near Decatur, in Macon county, in 1870. His father died when he was a little over 6 years old. When he was 13 years old he started to working in a clothing store and followed that business for ten years. He gave up this position because it was too confining. When not otherwise employed he has assisted C. O. Ebel in getting out city directories. He worked the northeast part of the city during the past three years.

#### FOR THE BOARD.

He first began work for the board of education in 1897.

In 1898 he was appointed janitor of the Jasper street school and held that position two years. In 1900 and 1901 he worked for the Barber Asphalt company as receiver of materials, but that work kept him away from home so much he gave it up. In 1901 he was appointed truant officer, working that year and in 1902. This last was a hard year for a truant officer, there being so much contagion, and on account of the enforced vaccination of children. He found 135 families opposed to vaccination, but induced eighty-five of them to have their children vaccinated and returned to school. He got nearly 100 real live truants, however, and was instrumental in having one boy sent to Glenwood. He learned later that it didn't do the boy much good.

#### AT DURFEE SCHOOL.

In 1902 Mr. Collins was asked to take the janitorship of the H. B. Durfee school, a position he held up to the time he was appointed janitor at the E. A. Gastman school. He was given

the new school without asking a place. He always get along with children and is not afraid to look out for and attends to things that some people would trifles. He says that to make success of janitor work one must be the same as anything else.

#### FROM THE PEOPLE

##### Will Not Turn Out.

Editor Review: The citizens will not turn out as an organization. They twice voted on turning out delegates to the Trades and Labor assembly were not authorized to their union would be represented at the parade.

J. S. WILLIAMS, Pres.  
J. E. BENTON, V. CHENY, Financial Secy.

#### KNIGHTS SHORT OF FULL

Louisville, Sept. 2.—As a result of a deficit in the entertainment of the Knights of Pythias biennial campment, just held, an attack suit was filed against the biennial committee, composed of seventeen Louisville residents, by Thomas M. Co., who claim \$766.26 for unpaid the Uniform Rank.

Part of this claim is for special privileges and decorations for the tent of Major General J. C. Carnahan of Indianapolis, now in chief of the Uniform Rank.





*Decatur Herald*

# Gastman School *Head, April 14, 1976* Sold to Church

By Linda Doherty

Gastman School has been empty since classes ended last year. But the building at 210 W. North St. may not remain empty for long.

Supt. Robert Oakes told members of the Decatur Board of Education Tuesday night that the school has been sold to the First United Methodist Church for \$148,500.

"We've been having discussions with the church for some time," he said, "and it's my understanding that they will conduct a feasibility study to see how it could be used for church and community activities.

Gastman School was one of four school properties offered for sale last fall. The school district originally asked a price of \$195,000 for the building.

Karl E. Meurlot, director of district business affairs, also told board members that the district has reached a settlement with the Norfolk & Western Railway Co. for damages to school district property from the July 19, 1974, railyard explosion.

Meurlot said the settlement of \$200,344.25 was for damages not covered by insurance and that it brings to an end claims the district has sought for explosion damages.

In other action, the board accepted the resignation of Joseph E. Peverly, a shop

teacher at Johns Hill Middle School.

Peverly was acquitted recently on a charge that he committed a battery against a 13-year-old student Nov. 10.

As a result of that incident, he was suspended from his teaching position Nov. 12 without pay. In January, the Board of Education dismissed him on charges of cruelty, incompetency and insubordination stemming from incidents in 1971 and 1974.

Tuesday night the board authorized back pay for Peverly for the time between Nov. 12 and Dec. 12 and voided their decision to dismiss him.

Peverly's resignation will make a hearing on his dismissal scheduled for April 20 unnecessary. The hearing would have determined if he should be reinstated.

School district staff is working toward finding the number of teachers that will need to be rehired for next year, Oakes said. Over 100 positions that need to be filled already have been advertised, and additional positions will be advertised today in the school district bulletin "Inside Story," he said.

In other matters, board members re-elected Jim H. Hazelrigg as board president, reappointed Karl E. Meurlot district treasurer and Robert Oakes as secretary of the board.

# First Methodist *Decatur Review Head, April 14, 1976* Buys Gastman

By Linda Doherty

The playground stands empty and deserted. Many of the windows, once adorned with the drawings of school children, now are covered by boards.

Gastman School has remained vacant since classes were finished last spring and the children who filled its rooms and hallways were moved to French School.

But the school building at 210 W. North St., built in 1904, soon may begin to take on a new look.

Decatur School Supt. Robert Oakes said Tuesday night that Gastman has been sold to First United Methodist Church for \$148,500. Originally the district was asking \$195,000.

Gastman School was one of four school district properties offered for sale last fall. The others were Stephen Decatur High School, 400 N. Franklin St.; Eldorado School, 1050 44th St.; and 37 acres east of the new Stephen Decatur High School.

Dr. Harold Loyd, pastor at First Methodist, said today a church committee is investigating possible uses for the Gastman building.

The lot will be used for church parking only, he said, and possible uses for the building include making it a place for Scout meetings to be held, a place for craft projects to be done and possibly the location for workshops.

The committee will report June 16 to the church's administrative board on what should be done with the building, said Dr. Loyd.

"We would be interested in any non-profit group who might need some space (in the building) because we have plenty we'd be willing to share," he said.

"We'd like to preserve this historic building as long as we can. We didn't buy it for the building, however. We bought it for the land to give the church room to expand."

Related Story on Page 22



# School District to Advertise Four Properties

In a renewed effort to dispose of school buildings and property it does not need, the Decatur School District will begin advertising those properties it has for sale.

Since the Board of Education placed six properties on the market in May, the district has relied on news accounts and word of mouth to let the public know of their availability.

Karl E. Meurlot, school district director of business affairs, said the district has worked with a realtor in trying to dispose of one property but has not formally advertised.

Only four of the six properties the school board was originally trying to sell will be advertised. The remaining two are tied up in potential lease or purchase negotiations between the school district and the

## Decatur Park District

The four properties to be advertised, and the price being asked for each, are Stephen Decatur High School, 400 N. Franklin St., \$635,000; Gastman School, 320 W. North St., \$195,000; Eldorado School, 1050 44th St., \$90,000; and 37 acres east of the new Stephen Decatur High School, \$536,500 or \$14,500 an acre.

The school board at its Sept. 23 meeting authorized the administration to enter negotiations with the park district on leasing Excelsior South School, 5580 North Fork Rd., for a nominal sum.

The park district also has first chance to purchase or otherwise acquire 25 acres the school district owns on W. Grove Road in the South Shores area.

This property was acquired by the school district in a land

swap with the park district. Under terms of the swap agreement, the park district was to be offered first chance to repurchase the property if it was ever sold.

Decatur Supt. Robert Oakes said Thursday the park district has expressed a desire to reacquire the 25 acres.

Negotiations on the W. Grove Road property and the Excelsior School lease are continuing, he said.

If the school district is successful in selling any of its surplus property, the money would be a welcome addition to the building operations and maintenance fund. This fund is projected to go deep into the red in the next few years because of rapidly increasing operating costs.

The district could make a substantial profit on the sale of

one property — the 37 acres adjacent to the new high school. The land is located south of E. Mound Road and extends from the high school property on the west to Woodford Street on the east.

The school district acquired 30 or 37 acres last December by exercising an option it had taken on the property in February of 1973, when the new Stephen Decatur High property was purchased. All the land was owned by Ralph Barding.

Of the 37 acres now for sale, seven were purchased for \$6,500 an acre in 1973 and the remaining 30 were acquired last year for \$9,500 an acre.

If the school district realizes its \$14,500 an acre asking price, it could receive \$206,000 more than it paid for the property.





*W. A. Gorman.*

*Past and Present of the City of Decatur and Macon  
County, Illinois; S. J. Clarke Publishing Company  
Chicago, 1903*



the 14th of November, 1834, in Pennsylvania, of which state his parents, Joseph and Anna (Shaffer) Buffmeyer, were also natives. He was their only child. In 1856 the family removed to Illinois and first located west of Chicago. Subsequently our subject became a resident of McLean county, this state, and from there removed to Moultrie county. It was in 1879 that he came to Macon county and purchased forty acres of land on section 2, Whitmore township, which had already been placed under cultivation. Later he added to his farm another tract of forty acres on section 11, just across the road from his former purchase, and he was actively engaged in the operation of his land for some years. In connection with general farming he engaged in stock raising to some extent and met with good success in the raising of hogs. Since 1896 he has practically lived retired, leaving the management of the farm to his son Joseph, who now devotes considerable attention to the raising of fruit. The farm is very productive and yields a handsome return for the care and labor bestowed upon it.

In 1854 Mr. Buffmeyer was united in marriage to Miss Mary Hartman, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and to them have been born ten children, those still living being John, who is married and lives in Oregon; Joseph, who is single and resides upon the home farm; Benjamin, who is married and also follows farming in Whitmore township; Lou, wife of Frederick Myers; and Annie, at home.

Mr. Buffmeyer has served as school director one term and as ditch commissioner five years, being the present incumbent in the latter office. He and his family are members of the German Baptist church and stand high in the community where they reside. Hospitality reigns supreme in their pleasant home, which is a modern frame residence, surrounded by spacious lawns,

beautiful shade trees and an abundance of flowers. In his political affiliations Mr. Buffmeyer is an ardent Republican and he takes quite an active and influential part in local affairs, his opinions carrying weight with his neighbors and many friends.

#### ENOCH A. GASTMAN.

Enoch A. Gastman has a record hardly paralleled in the history of the country for through forty-one years he has remained at the head of the Decatur schools. Several times has he handed in his resignation, but each time the school board and his fellow townsmen have urged him to remain in the position, which he has so honorably and creditably filled. No city in this great commonwealth has a better school system than Decatur and this is attributable in large measure to the earnest efforts, marked ability and untiring devotion of Enoch A. Gastman. He has been so closely and prominently connected with the educational and moral interests here that no history of the community would be complete without the record of his career. It is a widely acknowledged fact that the most important work to which a man can direct his energies is that of teaching, whether it be from the pulpit, from the lecture platform or from the schoolroom. Its primary object is ever the same, the development of one's latent powers that the duties of life may be bravely met and well performed. It would be impossible to estimate the influence of the life of Mr. Gastman upon those with whom he has come in contact, but there are hundreds of people who have been under his instruction and who acknowledge their indebtedness to him for so shaping their course in early years that in later life they have become valued factors in the affairs of the various communities in which they have lived.

*S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1903*



Enoch A. Gastman is a native of New York city, but almost his entire life has been passed in Illinois and he has the deepest love for the state which has so honored him. His natal day was June 15, 1834, but in April, 1838, he was brought to McLean county, the family home being established near Hudson. His early life was quietly passed in a manner not unlike that of most boys of the period. Books were always a source of pleasure to him and his interest in the work of the schoolroom prompted him to enter upon the teacher's profession as he neared manhood. He was twenty years of age when on the 10th of October, 1854, he first took his place in the schoolroom as an instructor, being employed in Saybrook, Illinois. In the year 1855 he was a student in the Illinois Wesleyan University and in the following year he accepted a position as teacher in Kappa, Illinois, where he remained for nine months, or throughout the scholastic year. In 1857 he entered Eureka College and on the 5th of October of that year he matriculated in the Illinois Normal University. It was on that date that the institution opened and he was graduated with the first class on the 29th of June, 1860. On the 10th of the following September Mr. Gastman became connected with the schools of Decatur, being assigned to a position as teacher in the third grade. In the spring of 1861 he taught a three months' term of school in Hudson, Illinois, and on the 12th of July, 1862, he was appointed the first superintendent of the city schools of Decatur and the first principal of the high school. Here he has remained continuously since. To give an entire history of his life would be to present a faithful picture of the work done along educational lines in Decatur. During the forty-one years of his active superintendency marked progress has been made. Decatur keeping abreast with the universal improvement along educational lines. At first Mr. Gast-

man received a salary of only two hundred and seventy dollars for six months' term of school, but gradually he was advanced until he has received on an average of seventeen hundred and twenty-eight dollars and fifty cents per year for each year of the four decades in which he has been superintendent. Only twice during this entire period has he ever spoken of salary to the school board. At the beginning of the second year he was re-appointed to his position with no advance, while another man doing the same work received an increase of five dollars per month. Mr. Gastman spoke of this matter to the school board and was given the increase. Later, when he was receiving a salary of nine hundred dollars per year he was offered a school in a neighboring city with the salary of twelve hundred and fifty dollars per year. Wishing to accept the more remunerative position, Mr. Gastman asked to be released from his contract with Decatur and the board replied to this request by advancing his salary to twelve hundred. Many important positions have been offered him, for his reputation has spread far and wide and his name has been inscribed high on the roll of prominent educators in Illinois. Again and again he has received flattering offers, and at one time he decided to accept one. Accordingly he presented his resignation to the school board, but it was at once proposed that his salary should be advanced to twenty-five hundred dollars per year and that he should be elected for a term of five years. Certainly no higher testimonial of the public regard or of his great usefulness could be given. As long as Mr. Gastman wishes to remain in the position it is undoubtedly his. He has, indeed, become a part of the school system of Decatur. He has instituted many measures of the greatest and most permanent benefit to the schools; his own zeal and interest in the work have inspired and encouraged his teachers; and his co-operation

*Past and Present of the City of Decatur and Macon County,  
Illinois, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1903.*



with the pupils has led to splendid results along character development as well as intellectual progress. As far as possible he has become personally acquainted with all of the students and has watched with keen interest their course in life after leaving school. During his superintendency more than a thousand diplomas have been assigned to the graduates of the high school of Decatur and thus leaving his guidance young men and women have gone out in the world, many of them to attain to prominence and honor in the active, useful and important walks of life. Mr. Gastman has always been a close and earnest student of social and economic questions and of all things pertaining to the progress of the world. His interest of course has centered along the line of his chosen field of labor and he has been quick to adopt all new measures which he believed would contribute to intellectual progress and improvement. Public spirited in an eminent degree his labors have been of the greatest benefit to Decatur and his name figures conspicuously in connection with the educational history of the state. For a half century he has been a teacher of Illinois and for thirty-two years of that time has been a member of the state board of education, during which time he has been acquainted with all of the state superintendents, being a personal friend of all but two of the number.

In July, 1862, Mr. Gastman was united in marriage to Miss Frances A. Peterson, of Sublette, Lee county, Illinois, who died seven months later, and in August, 1864, he was again married, his second union being with Miss Caroline S. Sargent, of Claremont, New Hampshire. At the time of their marriage she was a teacher in the Decatur schools. Unto them five children were born, those still living being Elizabeth G., wife of John H. Powell, of Seattle, Washington; and Louise, at home with her pa-

rents. Frances died at the age of three years. Winthrop E., who was a graduate of Michigan University and an electrical engineer by profession, died at the age of twenty-five years. Floyd A. died at the age of nineteen while a freshman at Ann Arbor. The two sons died in 1893 within ten days of each other. Mr. and Mrs. Gastman have a pleasant home on West North street, where they have resided for thirty-eight years.

#### NEWTON F. PICKLE.

Twenty-two years have come and gone since Newton F. Pickle became a resident of Macon county, where for some years he followed farming, but is now living a retired life in Decatur, his home being at No. 2075 North Church street. He is a native of Bedford county, Tennessee, born June 29, 1834, a son of John and Delilah (Lefler) Pickle, who were also born in Bedford county, where the mother died when her son Newton was a lad of fourteen years. The father was again married, his second union being with Miss Sarah Cheeves. He remained upon a farm in his native county until 1863, when he took up his abode in Johnson county, Illinois, while later he established his home in Pope county, Illinois, where he continued to engage in general farming until his death. There were two children of the family who came to Macon county, the brother of our subject being Joseph Pickle, who arrived here about 1880, settling in the village of Macon, where he conducted a meat market for a short time. He then engaged in the hardware business for a few years, after which he took up his abode upon a farm in South Wheatland township and engaged in the cultivation of the fields there for a few years. He next removed to Piatt county, but after a short time returned to Macon county and lived retired in the city of Decatur until his death, which occurred May 2, 1900.

*S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, 1903*





E. A. GASTMAN,  
(Supt. of Schools, Decatur, Ill.,)  
PRESIDING OFFICER.

BY THE WAY  
IN the history of Decatur education the name of E. A. Gastman looms large for Mr. Gastman was superintendent of schools for many years and laid the foundation for the present Decatur system. The following editorial in the Bloomington Pantagraph is therefore of interest:

Announcement that Mrs. Enoch A. Gastman of Decatur is to be one of the speakers for Founders' day at Illinois Normal university brings to mind the important role that the man of that name enacted during the first half century of Old Normal's history.

Prof. Enoch A. Gastman was one of the first boys who enrolled for the classes of the Normal university when its organization was yet in embryo in 1857. He took his courses of study while the young teachers' college was still operating in old Major's Hall in Bloomington. He was a member of the first class which graduated from Normal in 1860, and from the classrooms of the college he embarked upon a career as teacher which had few equals anywhere in the country.

He went direct from Normal to Decatur, where he got a job as teacher in the grade schools. It was but a few years until he advanced to the position of superintendent of the city schools, where he remained until his death, a period of about 40 years.

But not alone as teacher in practical school work every day but as counselor and guide to the Normal university, which had mothered him, Professor Gastman established a remarkable record. He was on the state board of education, which had charge of the university for more than 40 years, and much of that time served as its president. Mr. Gastman became known as an authority on educational matters throughout the country, and died full of honors as citizen and teacher.

The Gastman family stemmed back to the community of Hudson, and Professor Gastman's brother, George W. Gastman, lived to a notable old age as farmer and authority on subjects concerning farming. Professor Gastman himself retained his farm interests in Hudson for many years and devoted his attention as farmer to the scientific culture of bees and homemaking.

The return of Mrs. E. A. Gastman to Normal for Founders' day should be an occasion of historic importance and of personal felicitation.

O. M. R.  
Oct. 19, 1909



...the convention system, called the convention system, one of the two greatest trials taxing this nation's capacity for self-government. The other was slavery.

Skipping lightly down 105 years, let's turn to George Gallup, an opinion sampler whose own opinions are strong on the need for picking candidates by some new method.

"Party conventions resemble tribal rituals," Gallup has said. "Almost everything about them is phony. The spectacular campaigns and 'give 'em hell' speeches reduce office seeking

Like most political questions, no simple answer can be found, but—

—Conventions do whip up the enthusiasm needed to launch a campaign; indeed, they are an important part of it.

—They do provide a method, however macabre, for finding the necessary compromises.

—They have produced candidates who, if not all one could wish for, are incomparably better than the country has any right to expect.

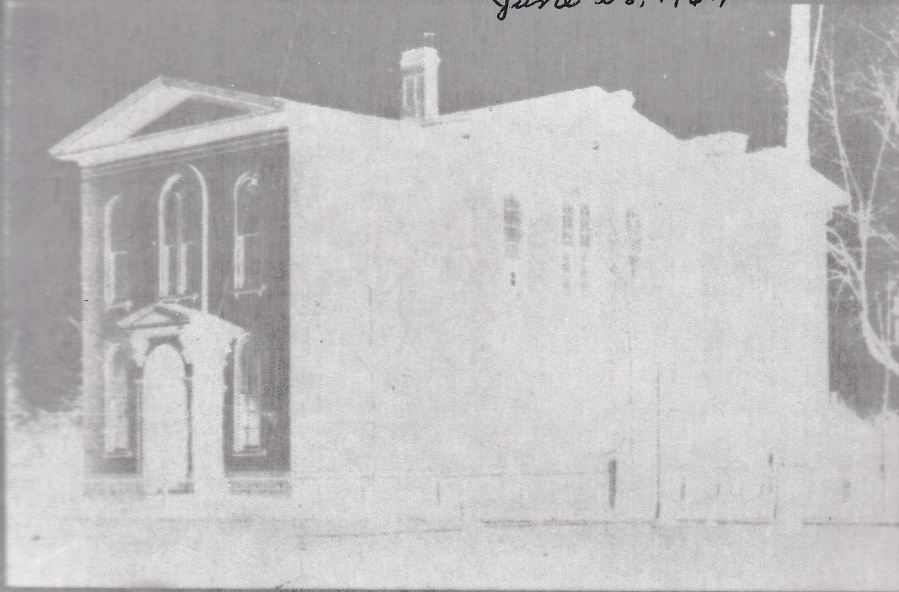
—They do come up with an answer quickly. Imagine the

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June 28, 1964



The Big Brick: a first class institution

## Decatur Diary

# Our Overcrowded Schools

By Michael K. Burns  
Of the Herald and Review Staff

Half-day classes as the answer to overcrowded schools may seem a contemporary solution, but back at the turn of the century Decatur students were adhering to that schedule.

It is not recounted whether children enjoyed the lighter schedule, though it is doubtful there was any letup on homework. And classes lasted until after sunset in the winter.

The occasion was the destruction in 1903 of the Big Brick or Second Ward School, Decatur's first regular public school building.

Until the new school was completed, students attended the Wood Street School in the afternoon.

The Big Brick, located on the corner of North and Church streets, had served Decatur since 1857 when it opened its doors to grade school students for the first time. High school classes were first held there in 1867.

In 1863, the foundation for the

public school system was laid in Illinois by a law providing for the taxing of state residents to build a second school in the third ward. The school directors thought this risky business "in view of the present unsettled state of the country," and ordered the levy postponed.

However, the next year the first two rooms of the Third Ward, or Wood Street, school were erected.

A growing Decatur faced the for the purpose of maintaining free schools at least six months of the year.

That same year Decatur district levied a tax and proceeded to build the two story Big Brick, with three large rooms and four smaller recitation rooms. In 1879 an addition was constructed.

J. H. Remsburg, who had conducted one of the private schools in Decatur, was the

first principal, but he was succeeded by E. A. Gastman in 1862.

In 1862, voters decided to levy a tax of 25 cents per hundred dollars to buy a lot and serious problem of school expansion, hampered by a restrictive school charter patterned for rural communities. So in 1865, the legislature approved a special charter for Decatur similar to one granted in 1857 to Rock Island.

The charter transferred the power of decision to an elected school board, who could levy taxes, select sites and build schools.

The early schools had no regular course of study; classes were suited to the needs of the students. But gradually a curriculum was developed and the first class graduated in 1867.


High school classes were moved to the new high school building on North and Broadway in 1879, but classes were soon moved to the Big Brick until 1903 when it was demolished to make way for E. A. Gastman School, taking tribute to the man who had devoted 46 years to the Decatur system.



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"Real public school history in Decatur begins with the passage of the school law, February 15, 1855, which provided for the taxing of all the people of the state for the education of all the children in the state, and required that all districts maintain free schools for at least six months each year. In June of 1855 ground for a school at the corner of Church and North Streets was purchased from Elisha D. Carter and his wife. These were lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Block 8 of Bandy's Addition and the purchasing price was \$800.

"The new school building known as the "Big Brick" was started the next year by the directors, J. J. Peddicord, E. O. Smith and P. B. Shepherd. On the first floor were two good-sized rooms with recitation rooms adjoining each; on the second floor was one large room and two small recitation rooms. The new building was opened in the fall of 1857 with J. H. Remsburg as principal, and David L. Bunn and Helen Parsons as teachers. At this time Decatur's population was two thousand, and taxable property was valued at \$445,716." .....

came  
"In 1860 Enoch A. Gastman/ from Hudson, Illinois and asked for a job as a school teacher. He was hired as the principal of the primary department of the "Big Brick". The following year he was made head of the high school, then superintendent of schools. His term of service in the latter capacity was the longest in the history of American education, 46 years. At first he received as superintendent \$60 a month for a six-month term." .....

"In 1903 the old Church Street School or the "Big Brick" was replaced by a new ten-room building costing \$48,839.72. During the time of its construction, pupils attended the Wood Street School in the afternoon. Each morning Miss Dempsey and her children held classes, and at noon the children packed all their books and belongings in school bags and took them home. Then Mrs. Lucy Nelson and pupils from the "Big Brick" moved in for a long afternoon. During the short, winter days, the school day ended long after sundown.

"After the new building was completed, a petition signed by many citizens was presented to the board asking that it be called the E. A. Gastman School. The large piece of statuary in the hall there was purchased by E. A. Gastman after its exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, and was presented to the school by Mr. Gastman as a memorial to his first wife. Mrs. Gastman left a memorial fund for a library after her death." .....

Excerpts from "History of the Decatur  
Schools" by Mildred E. Price

\* See data on previous sheets  
(St. Louis World's Fair)



**DEATH IN MICHIGAN.**

**Game West in 1838.**—His life and experiences. His father was born in New York in 1784. His father was a sailor. He came to New York by accident, the result of an accident. He was picked up by a New York sailor. He was married. His wife was named. The father was employed in New York city as a clerk. He had invested some money in the purchase of a colony made up of New York people and in the purchase of land. It was in the Hudson colony and an attempt was made to locate it in Michigan county.

**THEY TO ILLINOIS.**

A family moved to Illinois in 1838. It consisted of a man and two sons. The journey was made over the Allegheny river where they came over the Allegheny river to St. Louis and then to Peoria, Illinois. From their destination, they moved to Decatur, Illinois. It was 4 years old when they moved to Decatur, Illinois but in an address given before the teachers' convention he stated that he remembered some of the old buildings.

**WHERE PIONEERS.**

Pioneers were pioneers in the country. There were no school houses or churches. The principal articles of food were salt pork, corn and wheat. The first school was opened in 1837. It was a one-room school. The first teacher was a woman. The school was held in a barn. The children were taught to read and write. The school was open for a few weeks and then closed. The school was reopened in 1838. It was a one-room school. The first teacher was a woman. The school was held in a barn. The children were taught to read and write. The school was open for a few weeks and then closed.

**THEY TEACHING.**

There were always students. The school was open for a few weeks and then closed. The school was reopened in 1838. It was a one-room school. The first teacher was a woman. The school was held in a barn. The children were taught to read and write. The school was open for a few weeks and then closed.

**HOW HE WAS LAMED.**

Mr. Gastman told several times that the accident to his foot changed his life, making him a schoolmaster instead of a farmer. It occurred while he was at work splitting rails. He had opened a cut almost his entire length and picked up the ox to cut it the rest of the way. He struck at the cut with full force and he had great strength. He missed the log and struck his foot, the ox crushing through to the bones. The wound was a frightful one and as he lost a large amount of blood for several weeks it was thought he would not recover. After the accident he realized that he could not walk the fields all day as farmers had to do then. There was nothing for him to do except teach school.

**FIRST AVERAGE FALLS.**

The school at Cheney's Grove was a log structure. Half the floor was covered with pinecones and the other half was the bare ground. The seating was even more primitive than the school he had attended. The benches were big logs split in two and smoothed off. No saved timbers were used, either in the furniture or building. Though his position of teaching there covered only the early part of the winter he did not get his salary until the next spring, in April. He said he always felt that he made a failure of that school and that the people there felt the same for they did not invite him to return. He said he probably would not have gone back if they had asked him.

**WINS HIS SPIRITS.**

In 1855 Mr. Gastman attended the Wesleyan university one term and from there went to Eureka college. The next school that he taught was at Kappa in Woodford county, from April, 1856, to March, 1857. At this school he won his spurs as a teacher.

**COMES TO DECATUR.**

When the state normal school was opened at Normal in 1857 he was the first student to enroll. He graduated in the first class, June 29, 1860. In the autumn of the same year he became connected with the schools in Decatur, beginning as teacher in the third grade in the old Church street school. At that time the public schools were practically without system. Mr. Gastman was engaged for a term of six months at \$270 and at the end of the first year he was reappointed with no advance. During those two years there was no superintendent. In 1862 the high school was organized and he was made principal and also superintendent of schools. He held the two positions until 1870 when another was made superintendent of schools without his principal. Mr. Gastman continued as superintendent of schools until his retirement at the end of the school year that June. His resignation was to take effect Sept. 1.

**WIFE SURVIVES HIM.**

Mr. Gastman was married three times. His first wife was Miss Frances A. Peterson. They met at Normal university during Mr. Gastman's college days. She was a student and tutor in the university at that time. They were married in July, 1862. Mrs. Gastman died seven months later. In August, 1864, Mr. Gastman married Miss Caroline S. Sargent of Charenton, N. H., who was a teacher in the Decatur schools. Five children were born to them, two of whom survive, Mrs. Elizabeth G. Towell of Seattle, Wash., and Mrs. Louise Goben of Carlyle, Ill. The second wife died April 3, 1904. Mr. Gastman's third marriage was to Miss Belle W. Hobbs, in Bloomington, on Christmas day, 1906, who survives him.

**E. A. GASTMAN FIRST STUDENT TO ENTER NORMAL UNIVERSITY**

**He Will Be Mentioned Prominently in School's 70th Anniversary. Oct 21**

A number of teachers and former teachers will go up to Normal next weekend from Decatur to attend the university's 70th anniversary and homecoming. Special local interest attends the ceremonies because the late E. A. Gastman, former superintendent of schools in Decatur, will be one of the many noted alumni of the university to be included in a memorial service.

Mr. Gastman's coming to Normal as a student is mentioned in the anniversary yearbook. Seventy years ago, on Oct. 5, 1857, in Bloomington hall, the Normal university was opened. The first student to enroll on that morning was Enoch A. Gastman, a tall, red-haired pony young farmer of Hudson, who rode down to Normal on a load of potatoes. Later he became administrator of the first graduating class.

Charles A. Hovey, a branch of whose family lived in Decatur until recently and then moved back to Bloomington, was first principal of the university. A large delegation from Decatur schools will go up for at least part of the homecoming ceremonies, which will start next Friday and continue through Saturday.





**BUST OF E. A. GASTMAN.**  
is prepared to put it into bronze by contributions of 1 to 10 cents each.  
\$175 in All Being Needed.

*No date given*



Thurs, May 11, 1905

THE DECATUR REVIEW

## E. A. GASTMAN'S NEW POSITION

Adds a Line to His Titles and  
Furnishes More Work  
for a Busy Man.

The election of E. A. Gastman president of the board of managers of the James Moulton university will add further dignity to a long and honorable career and a few more duties to a very busy life. He will now be obliged to substitute almost Enoch A. Gastman, superintendent of schools, Decatur, Ill., president of the state board of education, president of the board of managers of the James Moulton university. It follows that he will have to write shorter letters or use longer letter paper. He can do the latter, however, without impairing his epistolary usefulness, for the more august titles a man wears the more weight his words have and the fewer words he needs to use.

### MAN FOR THE PLACE.

It is understood that the placing of Mr. Gastman on the board of managers was in accordance with the wishes of James Moulton, who wanted a practical school man there, and his selection for the presidency by his fellow board members was for the same reason. His wide knowledge and experience in school work of all kinds is expected to be of great value to the board and the university.

The president has no greater authority than other members of the board, but his position at the head of that body naturally brings him in closer touch with the university. He becomes better acquainted with the instructors and more familiar with the workings of the institution than he could otherwise.

For many years Mr. Gastman has been a member of the state board of education, the governing body of the state normal university, and for several years he has been the president of the board. This has kept him in touch with the highest institutions of learning and his election to the presidency of the James Moulton university does not thrust him into a new educational field.





*See typed copy of this  
microfilm of the original  
news item, August 7, 1907.*

Secured First School.  
When he was twenty years of age he secured his first school. That was in Whiner's Grove near what is now the village of Saybrook. There he taught three months in a log house. He only is said that his effort as a school teacher was a failure. He left because he was not invited to take the school for another term and he was not certain that he would have accepted the invitation if it had been extended. Then he attended the Wesleyan university for a term and later went to Eureka college. Then the state normal school was opened in 1857 he was the first to enroll and from that institution he was graduated in 1860. That fall he came to Decatur and began his work in the public schools. He was first a teacher in the third grade. For two years he held that position and then he became superintendent. When the high school was organized he was made principal and held both positions until 1870, when the position of principal was made an individual one and he continued as superintendent until his retirement last spring.

#### His Family Life.

E. A. Gastman was married to Frances A. Peterson in 1862. They had been school mates at Normal. She died in less than a year after their marriage and in 1864 he married Miss Caroline S. Sargent of Clermont, N. H. To this union were born five children, of whom two survive, Mrs. Goble and Mrs. Powell. Mrs. Gastman died in April, 1904, and on Christmas day, 1905, he was married at Bloomington to Miss Belle W. Hobbs, who survives him. Also he is survived by George Gastman, a brother, living in McLean county, but he is in feeble health and the expectation is that he will be unable to attend the funeral in this city.

Mr. Gastman's recreation was gardening and farming. His hobby was working in his garden with his flowers and his vegetables. He was fond of bees and at one time was nationally considered an authority on that subject.

#### Life Work Has Few Parallels.

The record of a life work of E. A. Gastman stands almost without a parallel in the history of the country. Forty-five years in the head of the educational system in a community the size of Decatur is short of marvelous. When he came to retire it was a voluntary act on his part. There was to him no intimation that he had outlived his usefulness in that position. So much had the members of the board of education grown to depend upon him that they would have preferred him to remain.

The death of E. A. Gastman recalls the lines of William Cullen Bryant—  
"The Old Man's Funeral."

Why weep ye then for him, who, having won  
The bound of man's appointed years  
at last,  
Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labors done,  
Serenely to his final rest he passed;  
While the soft memory of his virtues yet  
Lingers like the night bees, when the bright sun is set.

And I am glad that he has lived thus long,  
And glad that he has gone to his reward,  
Nor deem that kindly Nature did him wrong,  
Softly to disengage the vital cord.  
Teachers Show Grief.

When the news of Mr. Gastman's death was received at the James Mill-



Friday, August 4, 1907.

# ENOCH A. GASTMAN IS DEAD IN BOSTON

## News Received Saturday Morning Shocks and Saddens Decatur.

### ACUTE BRONCHITIS CAUSE

## Widow Expected to Arrive in City with Body This Evening.

Enoch A. Gastman, late superintendent of the public schools of Decatur, died Saturday, Aug. 2, at the Parker House, Boston, Mass. His death was entirely unexpected by his Decatur friends. When he left home about two weeks ago he was as well, apparently, as he had been for several years.

Several friends of the family received telegrams announcing his death. These messages came from Mrs. Gastman, who was with her husband at the time.

Later in the day a message was received saying that Mrs. Gastman would leave Boston Saturday noon for Decatur. The expectation is that she will arrive here this evening on the Wabash continental train. No announcement of the time of the funeral has been made.

Superintendent and Mrs. Gastman left Decatur two weeks ago for a pleasure trip through the east. They visited a week in New Hampshire and then went to Boston, arriving there on Monday last. They had planned to return home the first of the current week.

### Death Due to Bronchitis.

Mrs. Gastman's death was due to bronchitis, with which he had frequently been troubled. Friday he was not well and remained at his hotel all day. In the evening he felt much better and went out for a walk, believing that the exercise would do him good. Before 3 o'clock Saturday morning Mrs. Gastman was awakened by her husband and at once called a physician, but death came before medical aid arrived. A weakener hastened the death.

Gastman is survived by his two daughters, Mrs. Louise Gastman, of Caryle, Ill., and Mrs. Elizabeth Gastman, of Seattle, Wash.

### Had Closed His Life's Work.

Superintendent Mr. Gastman, tendered his resignation as superintendent of the public schools. Before he left for his pleasure trip he was busy completing reports to the state superintendent and as far as was possible had completed the High School year work. Thus it appears that he had nearly at the time that he had completed his work in the schools in Decatur.

### His History, that of Our Schools.

When he came to Decatur there was a single school building. That was later built at the Church street corner and upon that site now stands a new, modern structure known as the E. A. Gastman school. In 1860, when Mr. Gastman began there as a teacher in the third grade, there were but four rooms in the building. That was afterward enlarged, but before his death the enlarged building had reached the point where it had to be torn away to make room for the more commodious structure that is the dead man's monument.

Thus he had lived to see the school system of this city grow from one building of four rooms, to eleven buildings the greater portion of them having eight rooms and this fall there will be opened another grade school building, and in addition there is the High School building.

As the system grew in the number of buildings required, so it grew in the advantages offered the pupils and today the schools of Decatur hold high rank in the public schools of the state.

### His Spirit Developed Them.

Much of the development of the system was due to the personal work of Mr. Gastman. He was progressive always. He was always in close touch with the teachers of the schools. He knew the details of the work and was in sympathy with the spirit that promised something better for the pupils. His enthusiasm was an inspiration to the teachers and that enthusiasm in his work never flagged. In that he was ever youthful and whatever else was said of E. A. Gastman it never was that he failed to keep abreast of the times in his school ideals and so far as was possible the schools were conducted according to what he believed to be the ideal, but always from the nature of things that could only be far from the mark that he would have. His close association with the board of education, practically being a part of that body, gave to him what some teachers lack, an intimate knowledge of the limitations imposed by the lack of funds by the limits of taxation.

As a matter before the last commencement when Mr. Gastman was talking with some acquaintances about his retirement from the schools, his intimate relation with the board was pointed out. Upon Mr. Gastman then said that during his term as superintendent he had always acted as clerk of the board; that during his service in that capacity he had issued warrants for nearly two million dollars. During all of that time he did all of the bookkeeping for the school accounts.

### Refused Increased Salary.

During the many years that E. A. Gastman served as superintendent in Decatur, he had calls to other places. Some tempted him to resign. Once he would have gone to the state normal at Garbondsle, but the board of education induced him to decline. In return for that concession they offered him an increased salary. Mr. Gastman declined the increase tendered him. Several times within the last ten years Mr. Gastman preferred to resign and spend his remaining years in quiet but each time that he suggested it the members of the board asked him to reconsider his determination.

Last fall he made the positive an-

nouncement that he would not be connected with the schools another year. What little time he said was yet his on earth he would spend in the enjoyment of quiet.

### His Fame Was National.

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When the commencement exercises were held in Decatur last June Mr. Gastman made his public farewell as superintendent of the school system. At that time he said that he had given the best years of his life to the service which began when he was 26 and ended now when he was 75 years of age. During his service as superintendent there had been graduated from the Decatur high schools 1,478 pupils. At that time Mr. Gastman formally introduced his successor, H. B. Wilson. In token of their appreciation of his efforts in behalf of the schools, the first week in June the teachers of the public schools gave Mr. Gastman a reception at the school building which bears his name.

### Native of New York City.

E. A. Gastman was a native of New York City, where he was born June 15, 1834, and when he was four years of age his parents removed to Illinois. They were a part of what was then known as the Hudson colony, a large party of which came from the east and settled in McLean county in and about the place where the village of Hudson is now located. There on a prairie farm his boyhood days were spent.

His experience was the experience of all of the sons of pioneers. His opportunities and advantages were few. He had no opportunity to go to school until he was 11 years old and then for only a few months each year. But he read much, at least for those times, for books were scarce. He read all that he could get hold of. But he had no thought of any life except that of a farmer.

When he was a young man an accident crippled him so that he feared that he could never do the heavy work required on the farm. In those days and he turned his attention to the duties of a school master. The accident occurred while he was splitting rails. An ill-directed blow of the ax struck his ankle and caused a wound which for a time threatened his life. It was always somewhat lame because of that accident, but soon after the cure he was badly lamed. He was handicapped by his devotion to books.

*See typed copy of this reprint of the original 8/4/07 article.*



ENOCH A. GASTMAN IS DEAD IN BOSTON  
NEWS RECEIVED SATURDAY MORNING SHOCKS AND SADDENS DECATUR  
ACUTE BRONCHITIS CAUSE  
WIDOW EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN CITY WITH BODY THIS EVENING

Enoch A. Gastman, late superintendent of the public schools of Decatur, died Saturday, August 3, at the Parker House, Boston, Massachusetts. His death was entirely unexpected by his Decatur friends. When he left home about two weeks ago he was as well, apparently, as he had been for several years.

Several friends of the family received telegrams announcing his death. These messages came from Mrs. Gastman, who was with her husband at the time.

Later in the day a message was received saying that Mrs. Gastman would leave Boston Saturday noon for Decatur. The expectation is that she will arrive here this evening on the Wabash Continental train. No announcement of the time of the funeral has been made.

Superintendent and Mrs. Gastman left Decatur two weeks ago for a pleasure trip through the east. They visited a week in New Hampshire and then went to Boston, arriving there on Monday last. They had planned to return to their home the first of the current week.

DEATH DUE TO BRONCHITIS

Mr. Gastman's death was due to bronchitis, with which he had frequently been troubled. Friday he was not well and remained at his hotel all day. In the evening he felt much better and went out for a walk, believing that the exercise would do him good. Between two and three o'clock Saturday morning Mrs. Gastman was awakened by the illness of her husband and at once summoned a physician, but death came before medical aid arrived. A weakened heart hastened the death.

E. A. Gastman is survived by his wife and two daughters, Mrs. Louise Goben of Carlyle, Illinois and Mrs. Elizabeth Powell of Seattle, Washington.

HAD CLOSED HIS LIFE'S WORK

Last spring Mr. Gastman tendered his resignation as superintendent of the public schools. Before he left for his vacation trip he was busy completing his reports to the state superintendent and so far as was possible up to that time, completed the High School year book. Thus it appears that practically at the time that he had finished his work in the schools he should lay down the burden of life.



Few men have enjoyed more extensive acquaintance in Decatur than did E. A. Gastman. That was made possible by his life time of work in the public schools of this city, where for forty-seven years he was a teacher and for forty-five years of that time he was superintendent. Recently the statement was made that so far as was known there was only a single case where any man had served continuously longer than Mr. Gastman had served in that position.

#### HIS HISTORY THAT OF OUR SCHOOLS

When he came to Decatur there was a single school building. That was later known as the Church Street School and upon that site now stands a new, modern structure known as the E. A. Gastman school. In 1860, when Mr. Gastman began there as a teacher in the third grade, there were but four rooms in the building. That was afterward enlarged, but before his death the enlarged building had reached the point where it had to be torn away to make room for the more commodious structure that is the dead man's monument.

Thus he had lived to see the school system of this city grow from one building of four rooms, to eleven buildings, the greater portion of them having eight rooms and this fall there will be opened another grade school building, and in addition there is the high school building.

As the system grew in the number of buildings required, as it grew in the advantages offered the pupils and today the schools of Decatur hold high rank in the public schools of the state:

#### HIS SPIRIT DEVELOPED THEM

Much of the development of the system was due to the personal work of Mr. Gastman. He was progressive always. He was always in close touch with the teachers of the schools. He knew the details of the work and was in sympathy with the spirit that promised something better for the pupils. His enthusiasm was an inspiration to the teachers and that enthusiasm in his work never flagged. In that he was ever youthful and whatever else was said of E. A. Gastman it never was said that he failed to keep abreast of the times in his school ideals, and so far as was possible the schools were conducted according to what he believed to be the ideal, but always from the nature of things that could only be far from the mark that he would have. His close association with the board of education, practically being a part of that body, gave to him what some teachers lack, an intimate knowledge of the limitations imposed by the lack of funds, by the limits of taxation.

A few days before the last commencement when Mr. Gastman was talking to some acquaintances about his retirement from the schools, his intimate relation with the board was commented upon. Mr. Gastman then said that during his term as Superintendent he had always acted as clerk of the board that during his service in that capacity he had issued warrants for nearly two million dollars. During all of that time he did all of the bookkeeping for the school accounts.



### REFUSED INCREASED SALARY

During the many years that E. A. Gastman served as Superintendent in Decatur, he had calls to other places. Some tempted him to resign. Once he could have gone to the state normal at Carbondale, but the board of education induced him to decline. In return for that concession they offered him an increased salary. Mr. Gastman declined the increase tendered him. Several times within the last ten years Mr. Gastman preferred to resign and spend his remaining years in quiet but each time that he suggested it the members of the board asked him to reconsider his determination.

Last fall he made the positive announcement that he would not be connected with the schools another year. What little time he said was yet his on earth he would spend in the enjoyment of quiet.

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#### SECURES FIRST SCHOOL

When he was twenty years of age he secured his first school. That was in Cheney's Grove, near what is now the village of Saybrook. There he taught three months in a log house. He always said that his effort as a school teacher was a failure. He felt it because he was not invited to take the school for another term and he was not certain that he would have accepted the invitation if it had been extended. Then he attended the Wesleyan university for a term and later went to Eureka college. Then the state normal school was opened in 1857 and he was the first pupil enrolled and from that institution he was graduated in 1860. That fall he came to Decatur and began his work in the public schools. He was first a teacher in the third grade. For two years he held that position and then he became Superintendent. When the high school was organized he was made principal and held both positions until 1870, when the position of principal was made an individual one and he continued as Superintendent until his retirement last spring.



### HIS FAMILY LIFE

E. A. Gastman was married to Frances A. Peterson in 1862. They had been school mates at Normal. She died in less than a year after their marriage and in 1864 he married Miss Caroline S. Sargent of Clearmont, N. H. To this union were born five children, of whom two survive, Mrs. Goben and Mrs. Powell. Mrs. Gastman died in April, 1904, and on Christmas day, 1905, he was married at Bloomington to Miss Belle W. Hobbs, who survives him. Also he is survived by George Gastman, a brother, living in McLean county, but he is in feeble health and the expectation is that he will be unable to attend the funeral in this city.

Mr. Gastman's recreation was gardening and farming. His delight was working in the garden with his flowers and his vegetables. He was fond of bees and at one time was nationally considered an authority on that subject.

### LIFE WORK HAS FEW PARALLELS

The record of a life work of E. A. Gastman stands almost without a parallel in the history of the country. Forty-five years as the head of the educational system in a city the size of Decatur is short of marvelous. When he came to retire it was a voluntary act on his part. There was to him no intimation that he had outlived his usefulness in that position. So much had the members of the board of education grown to depend upon him that they would have preferred him to remain.