

# Quick and fun facts about Oswego's schools...

☞ **First school:** Held in 1837 in an old log cabin along the west side of what is now Ill. Route 25 just north of Stonegate Estates. Funded by subscriptions paid by students' parents.

☞ **First teacher:** George Washington Kellogg.

☞ **First public school:** A frame building on South Madison. The Old Stone School, built about 1852 at the corner of Tyler and Monroe streets is believed to be the first purpose-built school in Oswego.

☞ **First high school:** The Red Brick School, built on the block bordered by Monroe, Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson streets in 1885.

☞ **First graduating class:** The five students in the Oswego High School Class of 1887. Class members were Addie Kimball, Mamie Smith, Addie Wormley, Frank Lippold, and Bessie Armstrong.

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The pace of change in the Oswego area seems to get faster every year. With the acceleration of change in the area, the mission of the Oswegoland Heritage Association—to preserve and interpret the area's local history—becomes even more vital with each passing day. By joining, you will be taking an active part in helping protect and preserve the area's rich past. Why not join today? For more information, visit our web site at [www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](http://www.littlewhiteschoolmuseum.org) or email [info@litlewhiteschoolmuseum.org](mailto:info@litlewhiteschoolmuseum.org).

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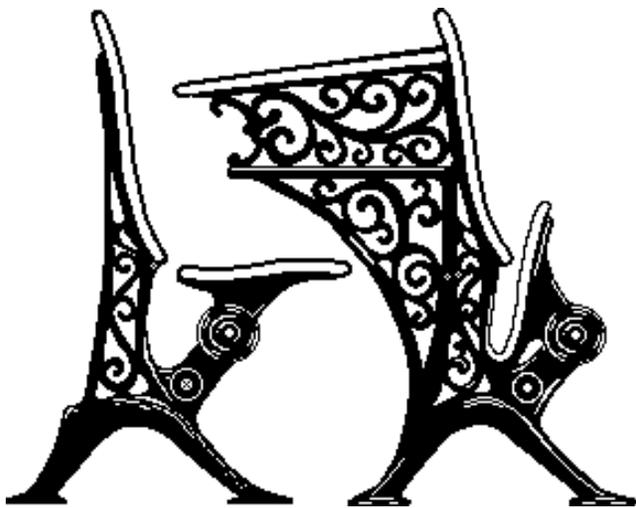
# From Country Schools to Consolidation



## Education in the Oswego Area

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*The story of the Oswego area's educational history, from the days of one-room schools to the 21st. Century...*



## Oswego's earliest schools...

By the late 1830s, enough settlers had arrived in the Oswego area for the first schools to be established. The earliest schools in the area were called "Subscription Schools" because groups of parents subscribed a set amount for each student to help pay a teacher. Teachers were expected to board with parents in the community.

A subscription school was established in 1837 at a log cabin the settlers found when they arrived, located on what is today Ill. Route 25 just north of Waubonsie Creek. The cabin had probably been built by fur traders, since it was very close to the village of Chief Waubonsee, the war chief of the local Potawatomi Tribe. The first teacher was George Washington Kellogg, himself one of the area's earliest settlers—his descendents still live in the area today.

In later years, schools were established in various buildings in the area, including in second story rooms over stores in Oswego's downtown area.

The first school in Oswego was a one-room frame building on Madison Street near Van Buren. About 1852, the Old Stone School, was built of native limestone at the corner of Monroe and Tyler streets. The two-story building was built as an "academy," with students from elementary through high school attending classes, according to advertisements in local newspapers.

## Legislature approves tax-supported schools...

In 1855, the Illinois General Assembly approved using property taxation to pay for public schools, creating the state's first true public education system. The Old Stone School was home to students from grades 1-8, and sometimes high school classes were also taught, depending on whether teachers and willing students were available. In those years, an eighth grade education was considered adequate.

The Old Stone School was gutted by fire in 1885, and the students were forced to temporarily move to the old Kendall County Courthouse, located on the block bounded by Madison, Jackson, Monroe, and Jefferson streets. Later that year, voters decided to demolish the old courthouse and build a new school on the site. The new building was completed at a cost of \$10,000, and housed students from first through 12th grades.

In 1887, the first class, totaling five students—one boy and four girls—graduated from Oswego High School.

By the early years of the 20th Century, Oswego's only school was crowded. When the Oswego Methodist Episcopal Church congregation voted to dissolve in 1913, the Oswego School District decided to buy the building, located at Jackson and Polk Streets. The first classes were held in the building in the fall of 1915. To tell it apart from the nearby two story brick school, it was informally called the Little White School, while the larger building became known as the Red Brick School. Both the Red Brick and Little White schools would go on to serve the community until 1964.

## First rural schools opened in the 1830s...

Starting soon after settlement, farm families in the rural areas surrounding Oswego built more than a dozen one-room school buildings were established by farm families who wanted to assure their children received at least a grade school education. The first of these were subscription schools, sometimes held in settlers' cabins and sometimes even in barns and

corn cribs. According to one Kendall County history, private subscriptions were used to build a total of 124 one-room school buildings throughout Kendall County. After 1850, rural schools were supported by property taxes paid by those living within each small rural school district.

Generally, country schools were only one room, educated students in grades one through eight, and were ideally no farther than one and a half miles from the farthest distant student's home. So grandpa's tales of walking 10 miles to school through frozen snow drifts is likely exaggerated, even though in horse and buggy days, students did have to walk to school—unless they were lucky enough to own a saddle horse. School busing was yet to start.

Beginning in the late 1940s, one-room country school districts began a period of consolidation. By the fall of 1958, all of the one-room country schools had been closed and their students moved to larger more modern buildings in town.

In the Oswego School District, the last three one-room schools were McCauley School in NaAuSay Township, Church School in Wheatland Township, and Willow Hill School in Oswego Township. In 1958, the last one-room building, Church School, closed. Today, all three buildings are still standing, modified for use as private homes.

## Growth changed Oswego's schools...

During the past several years, rapid and substantial growth in enrollment has begun to change the Oswego School District. In the fall of 1971, there were 3,491 students enrolled in Oswego's schools. In the fall of 2001, 7,740 students showed up when the school bell rang. And in the fall of 2018, more than 18,000 students were enrolled. Between 2000 and 2015, the total number of schools in the district rose to 21, including two high schools, five junior highs, 13 elementary schools, and the Brokaw Early Learning Center.

