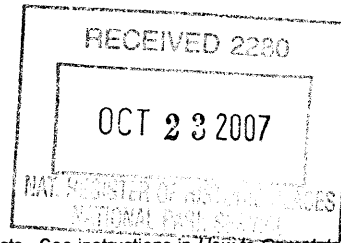


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**



1242

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Kasson Public School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 101 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NW  not for publication N/A

city or town Kasson  vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Dodge code 039 zip code 55944

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Fox 10/17/07  
Signature of certifying official Date

Michael J. Fox, Deputy Director, Programs & Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

12/6/07  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

1 Kasson Water Tower

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial

Revival; LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: concrete

Walls: brick

Roof: ceramic tile, asphalt

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1918-1954

**Significant Dates**

1918

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Jacobson, Nels (architect)

Madson and Peterson (builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota

Kasson Public School  
Name of Property

Dodge County MN  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 1.75 acres

Dodge Center, Minn  
1965, photorevised  
1982

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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	Zone	Easting	Northing															

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel J. Hoisington

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 1 August 2007

street and number P. O. Box 13790 telephone 651-415-1034

city or town Roseville state MN zip code 55113

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Kasson

street & number 401 5<sup>th</sup> Street, SE telephone 507-634-7071

city or town Kasson state MN zip code 55944

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Kasson Public School

Name of property

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Section 7 Page 1

**7. Narrative Description.**

The Kasson Public School (1918) is located on the west side of 3rd Avenue NW in Kasson, Minnesota, a city of 5,573, located fifteen miles west of Rochester, Minnesota. The property is bounded by 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NW on the east, on the north by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, on the west by 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, and on the south by 1<sup>st</sup> Street NW.

The property covers an entire city block and is situated in a residential neighborhood two blocks northwest of the central business district. A historic limestone water tower (NRHP 1976) sits on the northwest corner of the school property. The former Kasson Municipal Building, also listed on the National Register (1982), is located two blocks to the southeast.

The school building is oriented along a north to south axis and is located along the eastern edge of the tract. Large mature trees line the edges of the property and are clustered around the east (primary) elevation of the school. Smaller mature trees are located along the north and south elevations.

**Exterior**

Although the entrance to the school has neo-classical motifs, with its columns and entablature, the general sensibility reflects the Arts and Crafts style. The overall impression is that the architect, Nels Jacobson, employed a variety of fenestration and ornamentation that enhanced the architectural quality of the building, while remaining within the confines of a strict budget.

The building consists of three primary two-story blocks, linked by one-story connecting corridors. The center block is approximately sixty feet wide and eighty feet long, while the two wings are sixty-four feet wide by ninety-three long. It is 118 feet between the inside walls of the two wings. The building is masonry construction, generally using an English bond. Its most important exterior character-defining features are found in the classically-inspired main entrance, tapestry brickwork, terra-cotta ornamentation, and wide bracketed eaves.

The central block is rectangular in form with a hipped roof, finished with clay tile. The front facade is a symmetrical composition, two stories tall. The central entry is graced by a three-bay arcaded entryway with blind arches above rectangular glass plate double-entry doors. These doors are replacements of the originals, which were of decorative pressed metal. The blind arches are decorated with a diagonal bond pattern with header bricks and a wrought-iron lamp. The three bays are divided by terra-cotta columns, with arches and keystones above the doorway. This is capped with a terra-cotta entablature with a raised cornice. On the frieze read the words, "Kasson Public School".

Above the entrance, there is a row of six recessed brick panels with patterned brickwork, repeating the diagonal stack bond found above the doorways. A projecting terra-cotta cornice tops the wall. The roofline above the main entrance is dominated by a shaped parapet with terra-cotta coping and cornice moldings. On both sides of this main entrance, there are vertical insets, each with two pastel-painted metal panels filling the narrow openings originally used for windows.

The north and south wings are connected by one-story corridors. These have a triple set of narrow windows, divided by a stacked column of stretcher bond brick. Although not raised, this creates the visual effect of a

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Kasson Public School

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Section 7 Page 2

pilaster, further enhanced by ornamental terra-cotta capitals. There is a raised terra-cotta cornice, with raised medallions over each capital, and terra-cotta coping.

The two-story north and south blocks are mirror images with low-pitched hipped roofs sheathed in red clay tiles, wide overhanging eaves, and paired wood brackets. The wall finish uses variations on brick patterns, typically a raised rectangular brick rowlock, creating the effect of a recessed panel. The roofs are flat on the top and covered with built-up asphalt. Each wing has a small hipped cupola.

The front elevation of each wing has two groupings of four windows on each floor, repeating the fenestration used on the corridors of a stack bond and terra-cotta capital. Windows throughout the building are replacements. Some openings are filled with pastel-colored metal panels mixed with aluminum-framed sliding windows while others have glass block windows. Historic photographs show that the building originally had multi-paned windows on the upper sash and a single pane on the lower sash.

The primary south and north entrances have slight variations. Both entrances are single entry metal doors with narrow glass sidelights. They are framed with terra-cotta shoulder arches. To light the stairwell, the north entrance has two rectangular windows on the middle level, capped by paired arched windows on the third level. The south entrance repeats the pattern, except with tripled windows.

The rear (west-facing) elevation of the north wing shows a band of windows on the second floor and a single window group on the first floor. All have been altered from the original, with metal panels, aluminum frames, and some glass block. On the north side of this central block, there is a flat roof over the underground power plant. The central block makes extensive use of glass block windows on the second floor, which includes the gymnasium. The southernmost wing repeats the window pattern found on its front elevation.

The north elevations of both wings have metal fire escape stairs to the second floor.

The property immediately behind the school building (west) is paved, with a chain link security fence installed around the perimeter of the playground.

**Interior**

The north wing and south wings contained classrooms, administration offices and the library. The central building housed the cafeteria on the ground floor, a gymnasium on the second floor, and other assorted offices. On the interior of the central section, walls were wainscoted with brick, while the walls above are paneled in vitrified brick. The underlying original floors in the hallways are cork tiling while the floors in the rooms are a combination of brick and maple. The woodwork trim in the school is birch, which has been stained dark and varnished.

On the interior, the north and south blocks have double-loaded corridors on both floors, with classrooms on either side. The trim in these sections is minimal.

**Integrity**

The exterior of the building maintains a high degree of integrity, except for replacement of the windows and doors. The window opening spaces, however, remain intact. The patterned brick work, clay tile roof, paired wood

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Kasson Public School

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Section 7 Page 3

brackets, and terra-cotta ornamentation are all in good condition. Unlike many schools, the Kasson Public School never had a substantial addition, leaving the overall effect of the design and plan intact.

Most of the interior spaces have also been altered to some extent. Although structurally sound, the school has stood vacant for a number of years and is beginning to show signs of deterioration.

**Secondary Resources**

The Kasson Water Tower (NRHP, 1976) is located on the northwest corner of the property. Constructed in 1895, it was built on land leased from School District #30. In lieu of payment, the school did not have to pay for water. The limestone tower stands eighty-six feet high. Its original wood tank was later replaced by the current metal tank. In 1996, this land was transferred by the school board to the city of Kasson. The tower underwent substantial historic rehabilitation in 1999, funded in part from the state bond-funded County and Local Preservation Project Grants-in-Aid program. There is a also small, gable-roofed work shed on the south side of the water tower that postdates the period of significance.

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Kasson Public School

Name of property

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Section 8 Page 1

**Section 8. Statement of Significance**

The Kasson Public School served the community of Kasson, Minnesota, as its only educational institution for forty years, and is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the broad patterns of our history in the areas of education and social history.

The Kasson Public School stood at the center of community life, providing space for instruction to children, grades kindergarten through high school, teaching the fundamentals that enabled them to take a productive place in the community as they grew into adulthood.

The school also hosted an array of social services, such as public health programs and agricultural extension training, fulfilling changing public policy objectives on the state and federal level. As a social institution, it became part of the town's daily rhythm of life — classes, sporting events, parent-teacher conferences, school plays and concerts, and adult education programs.

The school is associated with the historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940," one of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office. The period of significance begins in 1918, the construction date of the school, and ends in 1954, when the local school district consolidated with the nearby Mantorville school district.

**Historical Background**

The area around present-day Kasson was first settled in the 1850s, but it remained a small crossroads hamlet until 1865, when the Winona and St. Peter Railroad was completed. The railroad was a major economic windfall, sought by several surrounding towns. Its final route was determined by the donation of land for a railroad station by Jabez Hyde Kasson. A native of New York, he had moved to Dodge County before 1860 and begun farming. He, along with Jonathan Owen and J. E. Bunker, platted the village of Kasson. By January 1866 a large grain elevator was built, followed by a restaurant, mercantile businesses, a saloon, and a hotel. By the end of the year Kasson had a post office and a local newspaper, the *Dodge County Republican*.<sup>1</sup>

The town grew rapidly. On February 24, 1870, the village of Kasson was incorporated. Within a decade, the town's population reached 1,054, remaining near that number for the next seventy years. Its economy centered around agriculture, while the downtown served an area between the more substantial commercial centers of Owatonna on the west and Rochester on the east. During the period of the construction of the school, 1917-1918, the town was prospering from an agricultural boom spurred in part by World War I. Reflecting the good economy, several substantial new buildings sprang up, including the Kasson Municipal Building, (designed by the noted Minneapolis architectural firm of Purcell & Elmslie and placed on the National Register in 1982), the

<sup>1</sup> Harold Severson, *A Tale of Two Cities, Kasson-Mantorville* (Hayfield-Mantorville, [Minn.]: Citizens State Bank, 1982), 179.



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Kasson Public School

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Kasson Hotel, and Saint John's Lutheran Church. The Kasson Lumber Company organized to help supply local construction crews. In 1920, the *Rochester Daily Bulletin* described the community: "Kasson, which is located in the center of the finest farm district in Minnesota, is one of the most enterprising communities in this section, and its growth in population is not surprising." The official 1920 census showed Kasson's population was at 1,150 people.

Soon after settlement, Kasson area residents laid plans for the education of its young people. The first Kasson school house was a log structure built on Mantorville Avenue sometime before 1865. With the coming of the railroad, the area's population grew dramatically, leading to construction of a new two-story school. This building, a brick structure dating from the late 1860s, is now a private residence and it sits across the street (south) from the 1918 school.<sup>2</sup>

Kasson doubled in size during the 1870s, leading to construction of a new brick school house in the latter part of that decade. After a fire severely damaged the building in 1892, the school was remodeled. This newly-refurbished school was described with some pride by the local newspaper as "one of the finest school buildings in southern Minnesota." In 1895, a second story was added to the school with a belfry.<sup>3</sup>

This building continued in use for the next two decades. In the fall of 1916, however, state inspectors visited the school and recommended its replacement. The local newspaper reported: "Our high school building is not at all adequate to care for the demands upon it. . . . If we are to continue to receive state aid, we must either build another building large enough to house the several special departments and the high school . . . or tear down the present structure and build a new one."<sup>4</sup>

The thorny issue was decided for the school board. On the evening of June 20, 1917, a few weeks after school had been dismissed for the summer, a fire swept through the old structure. Only a heavy rain prevented the flames from spreading to nearby homes. "The loss," declared the local newspaper, "is a heavy one and means that a new school building will have to be erected at once."<sup>5</sup>

In the wake of the fire, the school board quickly contacted the state to secure financial assistance, then proceeded to arrange alternative classrooms for the next school year. Although several architects were apparently considered, within two weeks, the school board hired Nels Jacobson to design the new school.<sup>6</sup>

Nels Jacobson grew up in nearby Owatonna, the son of a local building contractor. After graduating from Owatonna public schools, he completed his education at the University of Pennsylvania. Returning to his hometown, he was joined in his architectural business by a brother, David, who was trained as a structural

<sup>2</sup> Harold Severson, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 227.

<sup>3</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 27, 1894.

<sup>4</sup> "Kasson Must Have a New School Building," *Dodge County Republican*, November 23, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, June 21, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes, July 6, 1917, Kasson School Board, Dodge County, District No. 30, Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

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Kasson Public School

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engineer. Only twenty-five at the time he was awarded the Kasson School job, this was one of Nels Jacobson's first professional contracts. David would serve as the on-site supervisor. The local newspaper later reported, "Both of the young men have been fine fellows to work with on a contract of this magnitude and have done their best in their respective lines."<sup>7</sup>

Within a month, Jacobson presented his plans to the school board. The basic design was a three-part structure, with the elementary school in the south wing and the high school in the north wing. Rooms included a "gym, auditorium, stage, projection booth, balcony, boys' lockers, girls' lockers, grade rooms, recreation rooms, home rooms, classrooms, kindergarten, library, agriculture, industrial arts, home economics, commercial, band room, music, science, chemistry, biology, physics, offices, art, cafeteria, lunchroom, kitchen, toilet rooms, and growing rooms."<sup>8</sup>

In late September, the board awarded the construction contract to Madsen and Peterson, a Minneapolis contractor. The total cost was \$137,912. Construction apparently did not begin until the following spring, since the local newspaper reported on March 28, 1918, "Work on the new school house has started off in earnest this week."<sup>9</sup>

A host of obstacles kept the work from moving forward with much speed. The country was at war with Germany and the government discouraged non-essential construction. School building starts in Minnesota fell off almost one-half in 1918, down to 145 new buildings from 270 in 1917 (and 281 in 1916). Even when approved, as the Kasson School was, materials were not always easy to acquire. For example, completion of the new steam heating plant was delayed until spring 1919.<sup>10</sup>

The war intruded again in the fall of 1918, while the team was pressing to finish construction, when both Nels and David Jacobson entered military service, taking them away from Kasson for several months. In October, the *Dodge County Republican* reported: "David Jacobson, who has been clerk of the works on the job of erecting the new school house here, went to his home at Owatonna and this week has joined the forces, going to one of the southern camps. At the same time, his brother took his departure." Nels Jacobson did not return to the site until

<sup>7</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, October 24, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> The "growing room" was planned for the use of the agricultural classes as they tested various seeds. In 1913, the legislature established the Division of Buildings under the direction of a commissioner of buildings, in the office of the state superintendent. The first commissioner was Samuel Challman. Ralph R. Doty, *A History of State Influence on School Plant Construction*, Spring 1967, The College of Education, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Minnesota. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes, Kasson School Board, Dodge Co. District No. 30, September 28, 1917, Minnesota Historical Society Archives; *Dodge County Republican*, September 28, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> State of Minnesota. Department of Education. *Cost of New School Buildings for the year ending December 31, 1918* (St. Paul, Minn.: Department of Education, 1919).

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Kasson Public School

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late January 1919.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the obstacles, on September 6, 1918, the board announced the school would be dedicated on the first of December. As the new school year rolled around, the building was still not complete, even after the district delayed the first day of classes until late September. When the board could wait no longer, the partially completed building opened with just the elementary grades occupying the southern portion. Since the steam boiler was not working yet, classes were canceled on several occasions as the weather turned bitter. Throughout the fall, high school classes continued to meet in City Hall.<sup>12</sup>

Then, just when the anticipated dedication ceremony approached, another disaster struck. In late 1918, the so-called "Great Influenza" swept across the globe. As cases began to appear in Minnesota, the local school board refused to act beyond issuing a directive that all children with flu symptoms be sent home. In late November, the growing epidemic forced the board to close the school for several weeks, while city fathers banned all public meetings. Instead of a grand celebration, school simply resumed quietly on December 5, 1918, with all classes now in the new building.<sup>13</sup>

The building quickly won plaudits. In early January 1919, R. B. McLean, a state school inspector, and B. M. Gile, a supervisor for the federally-funded Smith-Hughes agricultural school programs, visited and filed a positive report. Later, H. H. Flynn, a state high school inspector, also looked over the new building. The local newspaper reported, "These men all expressed their admiration for the beauty and conveniences of the new building and all thought that Kasson has every reason to be proud of their fine edifice."<sup>14</sup>

No report was more enthusiastic than that of Samuel Challman, the first state inspector of school buildings and probably the man most knowledgeable about new school buildings in Minnesota. Typically a tough-minded advocate of strict construction standards, Challman was effusive in his praise of the new school. The *Republican* carried news of his visit to Kasson in May 1919, noting:

Mr. S. A. Challman, state inspector of school buildings, made the Kasson school a visit on Wednesday last and went into ecstasies over the structure erected here the past year. He says there is nothing equal to it in the state in the way of completeness and architectural design. He wanted a photo of it so that he could use it upon his letterheads. He stated that it was the first of its type — three separate units, connected with a corridor, to be

<sup>11</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, October 24, 1918. Both had previously served for two years in the Minnesota National Guard and had registered for the draft.

<sup>12</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, October 31, 1918.

<sup>13</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 5, 1918.

<sup>14</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, January 9, 1919.

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Kasson Public School

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built in the state, but said it would an ideal pattern for others who could not resist the temptation when once they saw this model structure.<sup>15</sup>

An editorial writer for the *Rochester Post and Record* also pointed to the school as an example of the future of education in small-town Minnesota: “The era of the little red school house is rapidly passing. We are now coming to the popularity of the consolidated school, with its facilities for educational training. . . . For architectural beauty and ornate simplicity the triple school buildings of Kasson, with their artistic brick bond, their well-balanced symmetry, and their spacious grounds will command the admiration of everyone.”<sup>16</sup>

The Kasson Public School was the beginning of a distinguished career for Nels Jacobson. Soon after its completion, he began work on a new school for Owatonna, completed in 1921. That building repeated the general floor plan of the earlier school, with three sections joined by connecting corridors. The Owatonna School, however, was on a much grander scale. Praised by the *Minneapolis Journal* as a “masterpiece,” it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.<sup>17</sup>

With his brother, he then formed the architectural firm of Jacobson & Jacobson, which designed numerous school buildings over the next two decades, including high schools in Albert Lea, Hopkins, Anoka, Shakopee, Granite Falls, Monticello, and Cokato, Minnesota; Charles City, Iowa; and Lake Wahpeton, North Dakota. He died in 1947.<sup>18</sup>

### A Center for Education

When the new school building opened its doors in the fall of 1918, its basic mission — education — was in the midst of a transformative period. Progressive-era reformers placed much of their hopes for social change upon education. Nowhere was that more readily apparent than in rural America.

In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Country Life Commission, with reformer Liberty Hyde Bailey as its chair. Bailey described the Country Life movement as “the working out of the desire to make rural civilization as effective and satisfying as other civilization.” Indeed, the commission’s purpose was “not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call attention to the opportunities for better business and better living on the

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<sup>15</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, May 15, 1919. Challman’s files in the state archives had only a few outgoing letters from this period, so it cannot be confirmed that he used the Kasson School on his letterhead.

<sup>16</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, September 29, 1921.

<sup>17</sup> The Owatonna High School was removed from the National Register in 2000 due to alterations that compromised its integrity.

<sup>18</sup> In 1923, Jacobson & Jacobson also completed the Federated Mutual Insurance Building in Owatonna, recognized as a significant and late example of Prairie School architecture. It was included in a Minneapolis Institute of Arts tour entitled, “Unified Vision: The Architecture and Design of the Prairie School.”

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farm.” Over the next year, the commission held open hearings across the country and mailed more than 500,000 questionnaires to farmers, rural women’s clubs, farmers’ societies and organizations, rural ministers, physicians, lawyers, and others. When the commission issued its report, a change in rural education was among the primary goals.<sup>19</sup>

Minnesota stood in the vanguard among the states as they implemented the report’s recommendations. A statewide Country Life Conference was held in 1916 at the College of Agriculture in Saint Paul, with attendees including agricultural instructors, normal school teachers, rural church staff, and other religious, political, and social workers. Among the participants were Governor Joseph Burnquist, George Edgar Vincent, president of the University of Minnesota, and Catholic Archbishop John Ireland.<sup>20</sup>

The public school always stood at the center of the hopes and dreams of the Country Life Movement. To keep boys and girls on the farm, the reformers pressed for consolidated schools staffed with teachers trained in agriculture and country life subjects, emphasizing the practical over the theoretical. The rural school, these reformers believed, was the community’s natural social center, a place where farmers and their families could obtain the latest information about crop production, good roads, health, sanitation, and domestic science, and where social, recreational, and fraternal gatherings might decrease the isolation and loneliness of farm life. In short, country life advocates saw the role of “the country school as a center for redirected education and community building.”<sup>21</sup>

The conclusions of the Country Life Commission and other prominent writers transformed popular attitudes toward the role of the public school in a rural community. One Minnesota commentator, writing in nearby Owatonna, noted the changing role:

Prior to 1908 the public school plant was seldom if ever used except during the brief daily recitation periods of the school. On Friday afternoon, school buildings were closed to stay closed until the following Monday morning. Over the weekend, the school grounds were forbidden territory, and this was true, also for three long months or more during the summer.

Today the public school plant is being devoted to an ever increasing wider use by the people of the community as well as the pupils of the school. It has become a place where children may both play and work; where young men and women may continue their education; where farm boys and girls and laboring men and

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Country Life Commission: Special Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Report of the Country Life Commission* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909).

<sup>20</sup> David L. Nass, “The Rural Experience,” in Clifford Edward Clark, *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900* (St. Paul : Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 133.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Harvie, “How ‘Ya Gonna Keep ‘Em Down on the Farm? Washington’s Country Life Commission and Redirected Rural Education,” *Columbia*, 19 (Summer 2005). Also see Scott J. Peters and Paul A. Morgan, “The Country Life Commission: Reconsidering a Milestone in American Agricultural History,” *Agricultural History*, 78 (2004), 289-316.

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shop girls may obtain free instruction outside of working hours; where neighbors may gather together to visit with each other and to cooperate in furthering community, school, and individual interests; where . . . the activities housed during the time outside of the regular school year are so varied and numerous that only a few can be mentioned here.<sup>22</sup>

It was a vision shared by the people of Kasson as they prepared to move into their new school building.

At the heart of the school's mission was the instruction of the town's young people. For forty years, it was the single public school in Kasson with annual graduation classes averaging between twenty and thirty-five students. Its curriculum reflected the general standards of the state board of education. Indeed, the community took great pride that their school met or exceeded state guidelines. For example, in 1930, when the state required daily sessions of at least six hours, "The local schools are . . . doing better than that for they are running a six-and-a-half hour day in the Seventh and Eighth grades and the High School."<sup>23</sup>

Numbers might reflect the day-to-day impact of the school on local education, but two examples suggest the school's significance. First, for more than twenty years, the local newspaper carried a weekly column that described events at the school, often in considerable detail. News was conveyed about class projects, sports box scores, and field trips for each grade level. Then, there are the recollections by former pupils of individual teachers. Among the most beloved were two sisters, Emma and Edna Sorenson. Emma taught at the Kasson Public School for eighteen years and Edna for forty-four years. As an elementary principal, she stressed the fundamentals of education and, wrote a former student, "her students were noted for their ability to write legibly and spell correctly." Her long record of service won her recognition in the 1958 *Who's Who in Minnesota*. The 1954 senior class dedicated its yearbook to her, praising her for "devoting her life to being an inspiration to her students." The 1956 P.T.A. created the Edna Sorenson Scholarship Fund, to be awarded to students who wished to become teachers.

**Rural Teacher Training**

The impact of the Kasson Public School on local education reached well beyond its walls. The school also offered several specialized courses of instruction, reflecting the views of the Country Life Commission Report and the writing of its subsequent popularizers. Two stand out: Rural Teacher Training and the Agricultural Department.

Between 1920 and 1936, the school conducted a Rural Teacher Training Program that sent more than one hundred teachers into nearby country schools over a four-county region. Called the "Normal Program" in the local newspaper, it admitted students who had graduated from high school for one year of training in order to prepare them to teach in rural schools. It sought to raise the quality of teachers in these country classrooms, where

<sup>22</sup> I. O. Friswold, "The Public and the Public Schools," *Minnesota Journal of Education*, 18 (April 1938), 291.

<sup>23</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 25, 1930.

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instructors were typically “sixteen or seventeen years of age [with] a third-grade county teacher’s certificate, obtained by coaching up on and passing an examination on the old common-school subjects, plus the good will of some district trustee.” The program also fulfilled a goal of training teachers who would bring English language skills and “American history and the teaching of our national songs, traditions, and civic ideals” into rural areas where immigrants and their children still spoke foreign languages.<sup>24</sup>

More than a dozen states adopted Rural Teacher Training Schools, beginning with New York in 1894. Although Minnesota began its teacher training program that same year, it remained relatively low-key until 1909, when, partly in response to the Country Life Commission report, the state superintendent issued guidelines that exempted its graduates from state teacher examinations. Minnesota’s program was “planned to train students directly for the country school experience” and required “training centers located and organized to most effectively serve the state.” At its peak, in 1924, ninety-six departments had been established in sixty-five counties across the state.<sup>25</sup>

Kasson’s Teacher Training Department began in 1920 with Nettine Perkins as the instructor, accepting ten high school graduates for the one-year course. The students were typically eighteen to twenty-one-year-old women who had grown up in rural communities or on a farm. Although the majority were from Dodge County, some came from nearby Olmsted and Goodhue Counties.<sup>26</sup>

The curriculum was a mix of instruction and practice teaching. A state report described the duties of the department:

The training teacher is expected to teach physiology, school management, rural sociology, both special and general method, to supervise and organize practice teaching, either in the grades or a demonstration school, to give her students an insight into rural life and its needs, and to inspire them with enthusiasm for teaching in the country, to visit former graduates and confer with them on their work; and to conduct an information bureau for the rural teachers for miles around.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Rural Life and Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1914), 288. Lotus D. Coffman, *Teacher Training Departments in Minnesota High Schools* (New York: General Education Board, 1920), 24-25.

<sup>25</sup> H. E. Flynn, Inspector of Teacher Training Departments, in State of Minnesota, Department of Education, *Report, Teacher Training Departments in High Schools, 1920* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Department of Education, 1920), 3. Also, State of Minnesota. Department of Education, *Statistical Tables relating to Teacher Training Departments in High Schools* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Department of Education, 1920), 3. Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Rural Life and Education*, 291.

<sup>26</sup> Minnesota State Department of Education, Records of Teacher Training Departments, 1920-1936, Minnesota Historical Society Archives; *Dodge County Republican*, October 14, 1920.

<sup>27</sup> Lotus D. Coffman, *Teacher Training Departments in Minnesota High Schools*, 20.

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The teacher's responsibility went well beyond simple classroom instruction, as described, "She is also expected to participate in the affairs of the school in which the department is located, write papers for the country teachers' institute, speak at farmers' clubs, and attend rural life conferences." In addition, "The training teacher can be relied upon to cooperate fully in promoting, under guidance of proper authority, garden and canning club work, Red Cross activities, thrift work clubs, [and] conservation measures."<sup>28</sup>

Of the Kasson graduates, only a handful were men. With few professions open to a woman living in rural Minnesota in 1920, this program was especially attractive since it did not require (in fact, discouraged) relocation to the city. Indeed, one observer noted the popularity of the state program "because they permit girls to receive training who could otherwise have none."<sup>29</sup>

The Kasson graduates, sometimes called "Perkinettes," developed their own support network through monthly alumnae meetings, at which they shared professional and social camaraderie. In turn, these alumnae often gave advice and presented practical demonstrations to the current students. The bonds were strengthened when the instructor made regular visits to the country to offer counsel and advice to her former pupils.<sup>30</sup>

In 1926, the alumnae banded together to boost their teacher for the position of Superintendent of Dodge County schools, submitting a testimonial to the local newspaper:

Because of her pleasant ways, she would aid both teacher and pupils in the same manner that she has helped us when we went to her with our difficulties, both great and small. She has set aside a Saturday afternoon in every month when we could come and discuss our successes as well as difficulties, beside assisting us at any time that we might wish.<sup>31</sup>

Perkins lost the election, due primarily to rivalries between towns within the county. Following an illness, Perkins resigned in 1928, and was replaced by Olive Savage, followed by Clara Thompson in 1932. The department closed in 1937, following changes at the state department of education.

The practical effect of Kasson's Teacher Training Department was that almost every graduate went into teaching in rural schools in Goodhue, Dodge, and Olmsted counties.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>29</sup> Lotus D. Coffman, *Teacher Training Departments in Minnesota High Schools* (New York: General Education Board, 1920), 75; also see Liberty Hyde Bailey, "Women's Place in the Scheme of Agricultural Education (Abstract of Remarks by Dean Bailey before the Girls' Club of the College of Agriculture, November 11, 1910)" in *The Cornell Reading-Courses: Lesson for the Farm Home*, II (April 1, 1913), 125.

<sup>30</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, January 21, 1926.

<sup>31</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, June 10, 1926.



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**Agricultural Education**

The school also took on the role of providing basic agricultural education as the federal government introduced new programs based, in part, on the recommendations of the Country Life Commission.<sup>32</sup>

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension Service to provide public financial support for extension programs such as instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics. The intent of the act was to encourage the introduction of new farming ideas into rural communities, and farm and home demonstration agents understood that boys and girls were often more open to learning new production methods than their parents. They also found that by working with youth, the parents were reached more effectively. These agents quickly became an integral part of rural life during the war years.

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 provided federal funds to support the teaching of agriculture. This act stated that the purpose of vocational agriculture was to train people “who have entered upon or who are preparing to enter upon the work of the farm.”

With its agriculturally-based economy, Dodge County quickly took advantage of this new legislation, providing classes of “practical education” that won the praise of the state inspector of Smith-Hughes departments. While classroom instruction was central to the program, the outreach went well beyond the school. The new building, in fact, had rooms constructed specifically for agricultural testing. Guy Ellis, head of the school’s Agricultural Department, was an energetic advocate of improved farming methods, announcing: “Farmers having seed corn to test can have a good opportunity to test it at the High School agricultural department. We are also equipped to test small grain, clover, and grass seeds. Bring in a small representative sample of the clover, grain or grass seeds.”<sup>33</sup>

Ellis also boasted that the department had “an assortment of poultry bulletins” to be had for the asking, with the offer of a visit from the instructor.

In order to continue the interest and assist in furthering the work in culling, as outlined by “Chicken” Chapman, Guy S. Ellis informs us that he will look over the hens which any farmer who heard Mr. Chapman sorts out as his culls, in order to prevent his selling any that should be saved. You can call him if you are interested.<sup>34</sup>

Ellis collected plans for “modern” farm buildings, and promoted their use, stating: “These plans are free for the asking and are worth much more than that, as they are secured from various concerns that have the services of

<sup>32</sup> Centennial Committee, *Century of Service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1963); Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-Five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> Minutes, School Board, District #30, March 17, 1920; *Dodge County Republican*, March 13, 1919.

<sup>34</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 25, 1919.

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men of experience and authority in this work.”<sup>35</sup>

Throughout its history, the school provided a host of activities that funneled resources and new ideas from the University of Minnesota Agriculture School and the state farm extension bureau to area farmers and their families. For example, when the University of Minnesota Agricultural School offered a “Farmers’ Short Course in Agriculture” to interested communities throughout the state, Guy Ellis sent students to gather signatures on a petition. Within weeks, a “short course” was arranged in Kasson and held at City Hall.<sup>36</sup>

The Country Life Movement placed a strong emphasis on the proper education and training of women. “The farm and the home are the two underlying factors in the country-life development,” wrote Liberty Bailey in 1913. “As the strength of a chain is determined by its weakest link, so will the development of rural civilization be determined by the weakness of the farm as an economic unit or by the weakness of the home as a social unit. It follows, therefore, that the woman has equal and coordinate part with the man in the redirection of rural society.”<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with this national trend, Kasson offered instruction to students and community members in home economics, with regular special programs on issues such as canning and baking. For example, in 1938, the school hosted a demonstration of canning methods for area residents, sponsored by the Dodge County Relief Office. Attendees were provided with instruction in the “proper methods of canning all kinds of vegetables” by “an expert in that line of work.” The teacher, trained at the Home Economics Department of the University of Minnesota, also distributed bulletins from the Dodge County Agricultural Extension Service. This agency also used the school for a series of leader training programs in “Home Management” in the 1930s.<sup>38</sup>

Among other special courses, the Commercial Course, designed to provide post-graduate practical training, was one of the most popular. As the local newspaper noted:

The Kasson School Board has wisely planned to meet the needs of the community by adding a commercial course in the high school. Business English, spelling, penmanship, bookkeeping, shorthand, and typewriting will be taught. Miss Milda Sievert has charge of the work. Several of the Kasson High School graduates are coming back to take commercial work.<sup>39</sup>

Although the course was not offered on a consistent basis through the school’s history, it appeared in various

<sup>35</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, August 28, 1919.

<sup>36</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 4, 25, 1919.

<sup>37</sup> Liberty Hyde Bailey, “Women’s Place in the Scheme of Agricultural Education” in *The Cornell Reading-Courses: Lesson for the Farm Home*, II (April 1, 1913), 125.

<sup>38</sup> “Homemakers Listen to Miss Mary Miller,” *Dodge County Republican*, March 23, 1939.

<sup>39</sup> “A New Department in the Kasson Schools,” *Dodge County Republican*, September 5, 1919.

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forms. In the 1930s and 1940s, these courses were offered as electives within the regular high school curriculum.<sup>40</sup>

The school served as the site for numerous adult education courses as well, including agricultural classes for returning veterans after World War II, adult driver education, and summer college-level studies under the auspices of Winona State Teachers' College.<sup>41</sup>

### Public Health Services

Public health programs grew dramatically during the second decade of the twentieth century and relied on the local school for their execution. In 1904, the first public health services were formed, financed by the Red Cross. The services provided were mainly school nursing, the control of communicable diseases, and infant welfare. Family members usually took care of the sick at home, and were taught how to provide the needed care. World War I brought a dramatic change in the involvement of women in public health. By the end of the war, nearly eight percent of the population had joined a Red Cross Chapter.

On top of the drive to win the war, the influenza epidemic of 1918 and the high rates of maternal and infant death led to major developments in local public health law. By the time the pandemic was finally over in Minnesota at the end of 1920, more than 75,000 people had been stricken, leaving nearly 12,000 dead.

Rather than retrench at war's end, the Red Cross began a new Minnesota program aimed at prevention and education through the employment of nurses. The work, as described by the local newspaper, "is carried on chiefly through the schools." Soon after the new school building opened, it hosted a free clinic with diphtheria immunizations and smallpox vaccinations, followed by a home nursing class.<sup>42</sup> The Dodge County Public Health Nursing Service was established in February 1921 under the auspices of the Red Cross. The Kasson Public School became a central location for the provision of these services in the city. Almost immediately, the newly-hired nurse traveled to Kasson to conduct screenings. The local newspaper described her work:

The examination by the nurse includes weighing and measuring each child, with inspection of eyes, ears, nose, throat, skin, scalp, speech, mentality, and deformities.

Ninety percent of the children have defective teeth. It is surprising to find so many of the children without tooth brushes and in some cases a family toothbrush is used. Funds from the Junior Red Cross were used to

<sup>40</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, August 25, 1938.

<sup>41</sup> "Farming Course for Veterans," *Dodge County Republican*, May 4, 1947; "Driver training open to Adults," *Dodge County Independent*, November 12, 1953; "Art Classes held at Kasson School," *Dodge County Independent*, May 28, June 18, 1953.

<sup>42</sup> "Some of the Work by Red Cross Nurse," *Dodge County Republican*, November 21, 1918; *Dodge County Republican*, September 9, 1920.

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purchase 100 tooth brushes which were sold to children at fraction of the cost, and in some cases, given away. Four dental health clinic have been held.

The nurse spent one period each day at the county teachers' institute, teaching how infection is spread and that children who have suspicious symptoms should be excluded from school.

Eighty-six classes in nursing have been conducted by the nurse, giving instruction in home hygiene and care of the sick.<sup>43</sup>

Public health programs, almost always held in the school, were aimed at parents, ranging from lectures on nutrition and cooking to first aid classes. This work continued throughout the school's history. A sample of stories in the *Dodge County Republican* shows that medical clinics, both for school children and the general public, continued throughout the years 1918 to 1954. These included diphtheria inoculations, testing for tuberculosis, smallpox vaccinations, routine health examinations, testing for hearing, a dental health program, and distribution of the polio vaccine.<sup>44</sup>

Kasson also had one of the first school milk and hot lunch programs in Dodge County. The school lunch program was a reform that began in Europe. By the turn of the century, large urban school systems in the United States served hot lunches, intent of improving the nutrition of poor students and thus enhancing their learning experience. The program expanded during the Depression as state and federal governments funneled money and surplus agricultural goods to public schools. Sold as a war measure, in 1944, there were 34,000 schools nationwide serving school lunches with the goal to "keep the wartime diets of school children at an adequate level." In Minnesota, the State Department of Education managed the program in conjunction with the federal Food Distribution Administration. The Kasson Public School participated in this program, "the first school in this county to launch a school lunch program." After the surrender of Germany and Japan, the federal government turned the wartime measure into a permanent program with the passage of the National School Lunch Act. Under its auspices, the Kasson Public School continued its school lunch program, beginning a school hot lunch program in September 1947.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout its history, then, the school stood at the center of community public health programs.

### A Community Social Center

One of the principle tenets of the Country Life Movement was that the school needed to serve the whole community. As argued by George Herbert Betts in his popular 1913 book, *New Ideals in Rural Schools*: "One of

<sup>43</sup> "Effective Work Done by the County Nurse," *Dodge County Republican*, January 20, 1921.

<sup>44</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, July 9, 1925; April 4, 1935; May 5, 1938; July 9, 1943; June 19, 1945; February 14, 1946; August 1, 1946; August 5, 1948; March 31, April 14, 1955. These are only a few examples of the steady flow of public health programs held at the Kasson Public School.

<sup>45</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, December 2, 1943; August 21, 1947.

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the most pressing needs of country districts is a common neighborhood center for both young and old, which shall stand as an organizing, welding, vitalizing force, uniting the community on a basis of common interests and activities."<sup>46</sup>

In short, the myriad social events that filled the school's calendar were more than just sideshows to the "real" work of the school — instruction — but part of a whole fabric that made the school, in the words of Liberty Bailey, "a center for redirected education and community building."

One writer described the role that a school played in small towns and rural Minnesota:

A distinct feature is the emphasis placed upon communities' activities which not only call for a union of purpose and hearty cooperation, but which provide for social intercourse. The list includes community plays, songs, gatherings, weekly social evening in rural schools, parents and mothers afternoons, school receptions, Halloween party, box socials, fairs, parties, picnics, May festival, basketball, spelling matches, reading contests, bread baking contests, dramatic contests, rural school exhibits, health and dental clinics, child welfare work, Red Cross Christmas Seal sale, health tournaments, lyceum course, entertainments to pay for leader for boys and girls clubs, organization of rural library, health crusade.

The club work too has taken on a new meaning. In addition to the regularly organized boys' and girls' and farmers' clubs, there were self-improvement and discussion clubs of both pupils and adults. . . . There were in addition for young people, girls' and boys' clubs, . . . athletic, sewing, victory, and country school clubs. For adults there were various organizations of parent teachers, rural teachers, professional reading clubs and mothers' clubs under direction of a school nurse. As an adjunct to club work, there were listed young people's societies, Junior Red Cross, literary societies, little citizens' leagues and rural workers' leagues. The schools gave plays and furnished programs for farmers' clubs, evening and day entertainments, special days and teachers' institutes.<sup>47</sup>

While this is a generalized description, nearly all those activities took place at the Kasson Public School over the years. The following are only a sampling of the many community events that found a home in the school building.

Among the earliest adult education programs at the new school was the annual Lyceum Course — a series of lectures and traveling acts. The 1920 course, for example, included programs by the "business revivalist" Harry L. 'Gatling Gun' Fogleman and the New York Glee Club. The Lyceum Series continued to offer programs at the

<sup>46</sup> George Herbert Betts, *New Ideals in Rural Schools* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1913), 25.

<sup>47</sup> Minnesota Department of Education. *Report, Teacher Training Departments in High Schools, State of Minnesota* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Dept. of Education, 1920), 13.

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school building over the next three decades, albeit sporadically in the midst of depression and war.<sup>48</sup>

A local women's club, the Friday Study Club, was possibly the most prestigious social organization in town. For several decades, it met at the school and in the private homes of club members. One meeting might be a special dinner, cooked in the Domestic Science room, while others might include a serious discussion about the effects of prohibition.<sup>49</sup>

With a fine band room, the school hosted local musical organizations, including the Community Choral Club, a community band, and Boys' and Girls' Glee Clubs.<sup>50</sup>

Several varieties of Parent-Teacher clubs met at the school, beginning only two months after the building became available. When a national association organized after World War II, Kasson parents swiftly formed a local chapter.<sup>51</sup>

Following Pearl Harbor, the school took on a new role in the nation's drive for wartime preparedness. As part of the enlistment process, exams were given for special Army and Navy programs at the school, supervised by the local superintendent and school principal. The first ration books were issued at Kasson School, while the Friday Study Club discussed "Bottlenecks of War Rationing" at one monthly meeting at the school. Students organized a chapter of the Junior Red Cross and helped to roll bandages. During periodic scrap drives, boys and girls scrounged through garages looking for metal and made posters to spread the word around town.<sup>52</sup>

The Kasson Public School clearly met the goal set by George Herbert Betts to make the school "a common neighborhood center for both young and old."

**Conclusion**

Following World War II, Kasson grew rapidly, benefiting from the economic boom in nearby Rochester. In 1953, the first grade was split into two classes, signaling continued growth in the years to come. In addition to space needs, the local school board felt increasing pressure from the state department of education to follow the movement to consolidate smaller, rural school districts.

In 1954, the Kasson and Mantorville school districts approved consolidation, soon joined by several rural school districts. By the fall of that year, junior and senior high students from both towns attended newly-merged classes.

<sup>48</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, September 30, 1920. Also October 2, 1919. Also see Lyceum announcements in *Dodge County Republican*, September 15, December 10, 1953.

<sup>49</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, May 12, 1921; February 5, 1926.

<sup>50</sup> "Community Choral Club Organizes at High School," *Dodge County Republican*, October 27, 1921; "Kasson is to have a Community Band," *Dodge County Republican*, May 13, 1926. For a local reflection on the importance of the music programs, see "Educational Work in our City Schools," *Dodge County Republican*, December 25, 1930.

<sup>51</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, February 27, 1919; *Dodge County Independent*, April 1, 8, 15, 29, 1948..

<sup>52</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, October 8, 15, 22, November 5, 1942; February 18, March 5, November 26, 1943.

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The new district, Joint Independent Consolidated District #90, moved quickly to erect a Junior-Senior High School. To avoid political squabbles, the new district board determined that the new building should be constructed at a site between the two towns. Construction began in 1956, with the students finally moving into the new school in March 1958.<sup>53</sup>

The Kasson Public School remained in use, however, as the local elementary school. By the early 1990s, demands grew for a new school building in the face of a continuing growth in enrollment. Following approval of a \$7.8 million bond issue in 1994, the new building opened in 1996, ending nearly eighty years of classes at the old Kasson School.<sup>54</sup>

The 1918 building continued to see service as a Learning Center, providing learning readiness instruction, early childhood and family education, and community education until a facility needs survey in 2000 declared that, "The learning center (old public school) is at the end of its useful life for all programs." Following the transfer of the Learning Center to its new facilities, the City of Kasson took possession of the property in 2006.

The local school is at the heart of any small town or rural community. That was especially true in Kasson, where a single building housed the city's elementary and high school grades for nearly forty years, providing education for several generations of local residents. Following the recommendations of the Country Life Commission, public schools in rural areas took on significant new responsibilities. In Kasson, the school offered not just basic education, but training for rural teachers and agricultural programs. It became central to the city's response to the growing public health movement that grew out of the experiences of World War I and the Great Influenza of 1918. The school also provided space for a host of social activities that were the glue that held the community together.

In 1917, C. W. Brown, editor of the *New Richmond Star* (Wisconsin), described a visit to Kasson, writing:

To Kasson's fine public buildings is to be added one more, a new school building to be built next year. The village's many fine and well-kept homes, its nice residential streets and its general home-like air, betokens a class of residents who believe in education, so that one does not wonder that so fine a school building as the one proposed is made possible here.<sup>55</sup>

The Kasson Public School, as a historic building, stands as testimony to "a class of people who believe in education" and as such is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

<sup>53</sup> News related to consolidation can be found in the *Dodge County Independent*, February 4, April 1, June 17, September 2, 1954; "Move Completed at K-M School," *Dodge County Independent*, March 8, 1958.

<sup>54</sup> *Dodge County Independent*, January 19, 1994; February 27, 1995. May 5, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> *Dodge County Republican*, October 25, 1917.

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**Section 10. Geographical Data.**

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots one (1), Two (2), Three (3), Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), and Eight (8), Block 12, Original Plat, City of Kasson, Dodge County, Minnesota.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the school.

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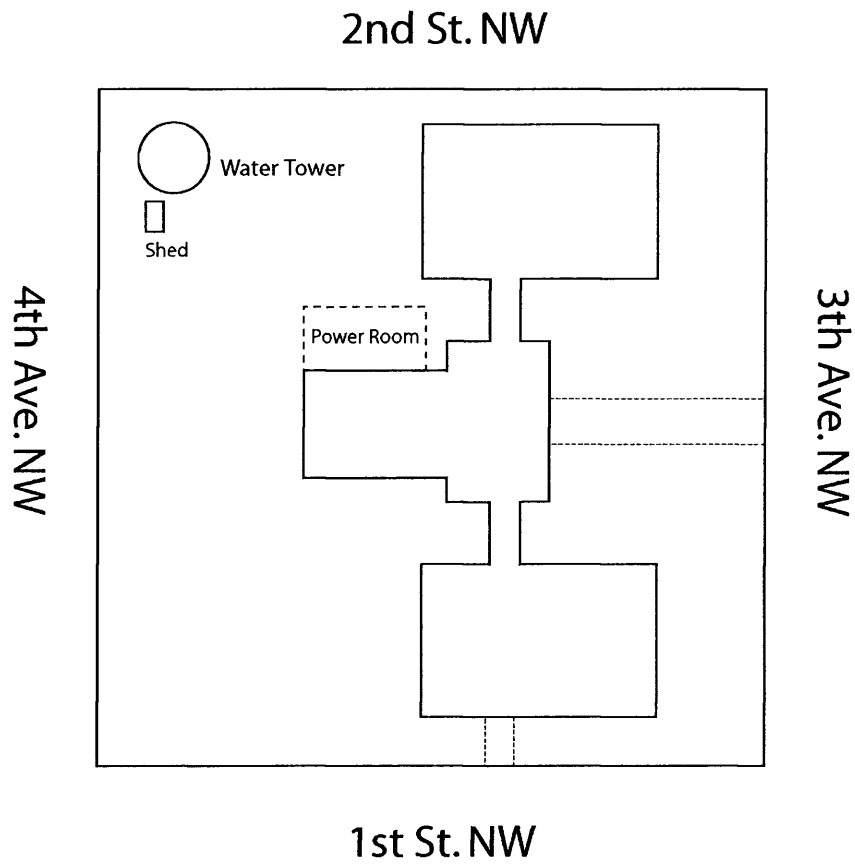
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Site Map



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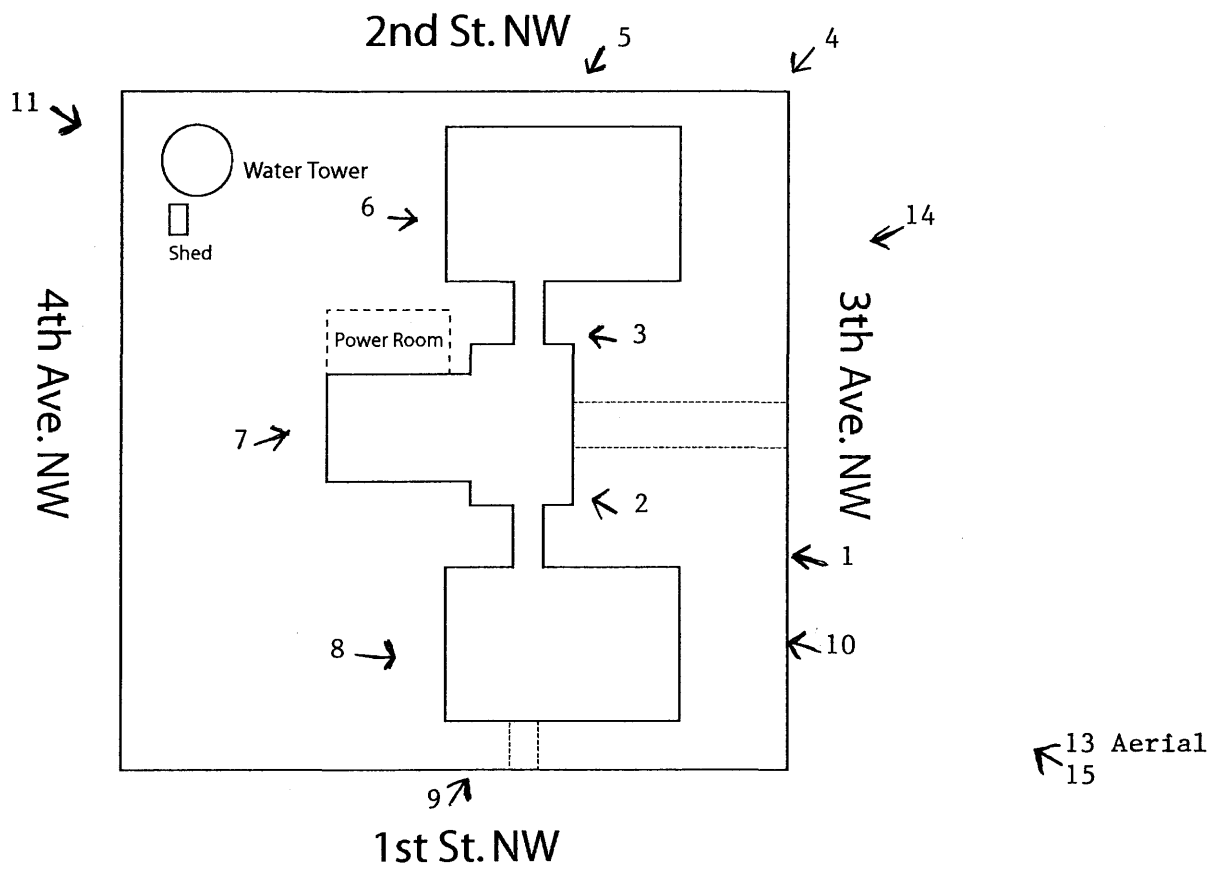
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Section Photo Key Page 1

**Site Map**



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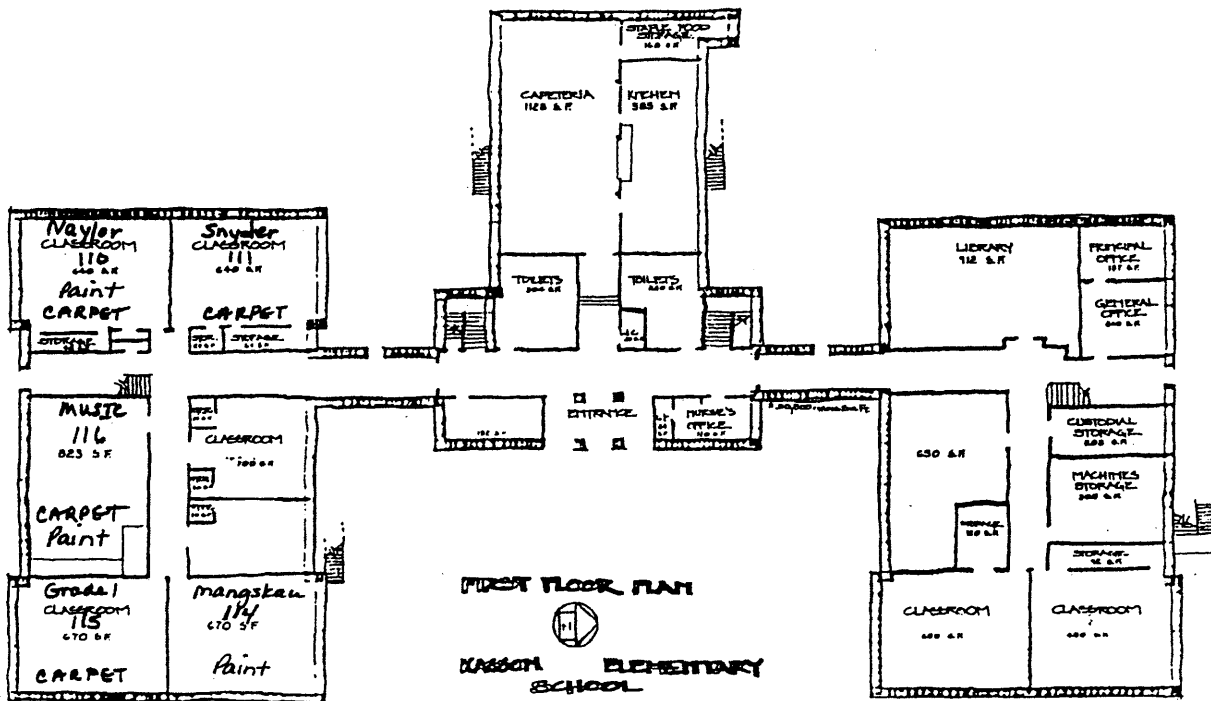
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Kasson Public School  
Plan, first floor  
ca. 1990

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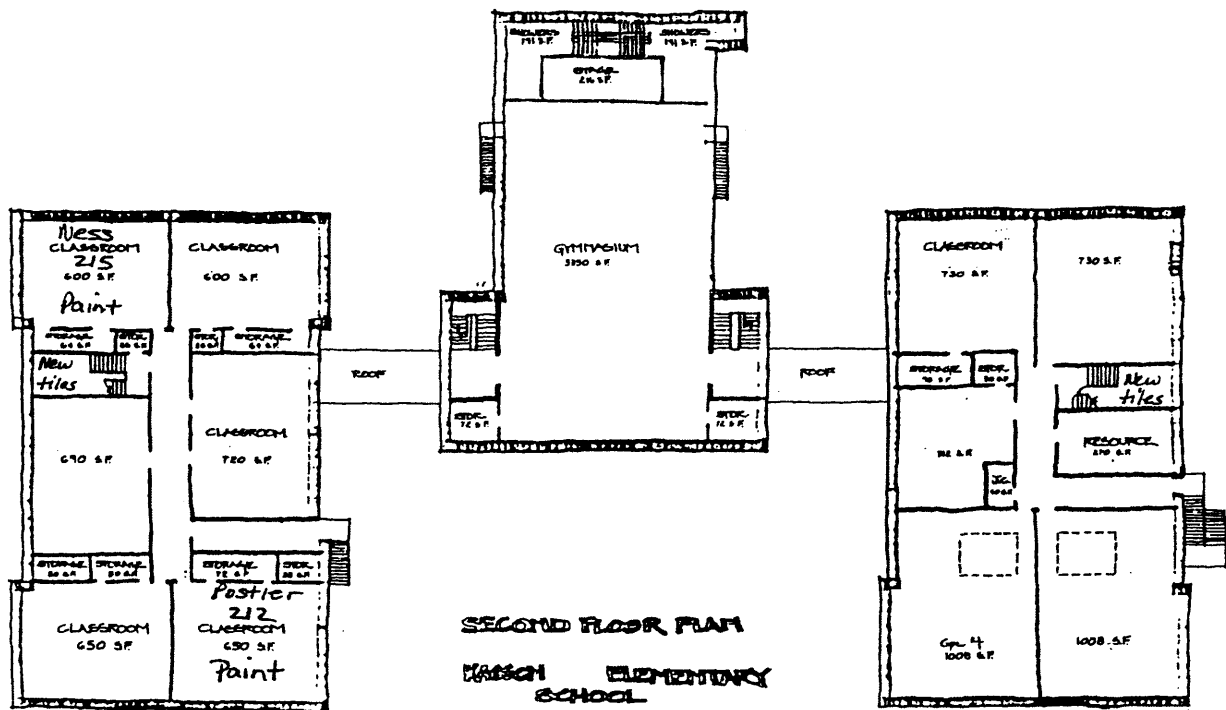
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Section      Floor plan      Page      2     



Kasson Public School  
Plan, second floor  
ca. 1990

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Section \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1

**Photographs**

Name of Property: Kasson Public School

County: Dodge County, Minnesota

Photographer: Daniel J. Hoisington

Date: August 11, 2007

VIEW: E elevation looking W

PHOTO: #001

VIEW: E elevation, main entrance, looking NW

PHOTO: #002

VIEW: E elevation, north corridor, looking W

PHOTO: #003

VIEW: E elevation, north wing, looking SW

PHOTO: #004

VIEW: N elevation, north wing, looking SW

PHOTO: #005

VIEW: W elevation, north wing, looking E

PHOTO: #006

VIEW: W elevation, central section, looking NE

PHOTO: #007

VIEW: W elevation, south wing, looking E

PHOTO: #008

VIEW: S elevation, south wing, looking NE

PHOTO: #009

VIEW: E elevation looking NW

PHOTO: #010



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Section Photographs Page 2

VIEW: Kasson water tower, looking SE (school in background)

PHOTO: #011

Photograph by Kenton Spading, April 2007

VIEW: Classroom, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

PHOTO: #012

Photograph by Kenton Spading, April 2007

VIEW: Aerial view looking NW

PHOTO: #013

Kasson Alliance for Restoration (KARE), April 2003

VIEW: Historic photograph, 1956, Minnesota Historical Society

PHOTO: #014

VIEW: Historic photograph, 1956, Minnesota Historical Society

PHOTO: #015