

# 'New' McCalla school was a model of modernity

"With an excellent corps of five teachers, and three hundred and sixty-five scholars, the new McCalla School building was opened for the first time this morning" — *Bloomington Evening World*, Nov. 11, 1907.

The *Evening World* reporter who had a look at the new school on the first day could hardly contain his admiration. All of the building's features were superlative.

An example of the reporter's exuberance was near the beginning of the article. "The new McCalla building is the only real sanitary modern school building in Bloomington, and after an inspection of it throughout, one wishes the other old buildings were replaced by structures equally as modern."

Did the reporter mean that all of Bloomington's other schools had outhouses? The use of the word "sanitary" makes today's reader wonder about that.

Anyway, another advantage of the new building was that "The floors of all the rooms and corridors are oiled." That was an additional advantage that we don't understand.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

The reporter described his tour. "As you enter the building from the south side (which would be Ninth Street) there are stairways leading to the basement and to the first floor proper." There was a nice, wide lobby, with cloak rooms on either side.

As for the heating system, it was controlled by "automatic regulation" producing an even 70 degrees in "nearly every room." The building was already comfortably warm, thanks to the janitor, Ed Trisler. The *Evening World* explained that "There is a system of ventilation in every room that is perfect. A big fan in the basement send pure air over the radiators where it is heated and then forced to the rooms above."

The reporter was particularly impressed with the lighting. He explained that there are

no "cross lights" that would be damaging to young eyes, and prismatic glass at the top "makes the inside walls as light as day."

School rooms were 24 by 32 feet and had maple floors. Mill construction on the ceilings prevented plastering from falling, "a thing that has caused considerable trouble at the other buildings." As for the desks, they were oak and there were enough for each pupil to have his or her own.

The sanitary drinking fountains came in for their share of praise. There were porcelain ones on each floor, and the old drinking cup, a bona fide germ passer, didn't exist at McCalla.

Restrooms were in the basement. According to the *Evening World*, "The basement is covered with cement floors, with lavatories on either side, to accommodate twelve pupils at a time, the separation of the sexes being accomplished with a solid wall."

The *Evening World* reporter continued his observations. "By 9:30 this morning the pupils had all been assigned and were reciting their lessons the same as if they had always used the new building."

The newspaper listed the staff: principal, Mr. Keehn; grade 1B, Miss Shields, 46 pupils; grades 1A and 2B, Miss Smith, 46 pupils; 2A and 3B, Miss Stalling, 49 pupils; 3A and 3B, Miss Goshorn, 49 pupils; 4B, Miss Wilson, 44 pupils; 4A, Miss Shinn, 41 pupils; 5B, Miss Underwood, 37 pupils; 6A and 7B, Miss Ray, 49 pupils.

And what was the cost of this new wonder among Bloomington schools? According to the newspaper, it was \$27,000. The contractor was W.F. Sitwell, and the architects J.L. Nichols & Son.

How did the school happen to be named for a female? The McCalla family went back a long way in Monroe County history. Margaret's father had moved to this area many years ago for the educational opportunities. The attraction was Indiana University, and the McCalla children took advantage of it.

Margaret McCalla chose to become a teacher. She taught in Evansville for a time, and then returned to Bloomington. McCalla had the distinction of being the first female principal in Indiana.

H-T 7/8/96