

History of Rhodes School

Rhodes School was founded in April of 1888 when a petition was filed with the Township Board of Trustees to divide up Cook County School District 3.

The newly created District extended west of the river to Scott Street in Franklin Park and from Addison to North Avenue. The new District was designated as District 9 and funds were transferred from existing Districts 3, 5, and 6 equivalent to \$1,545.37. In September of 1888, 40 men voted (women's voting was almost forty years away) to build a school house on property owned by William and Ellen Bele (1 315/1000) acres of land in the vicinity of what is now Rhodes and Wrightwood Avenues. The River Grove Bible Church now stands on that location. This school served for 59 years as Rhodes School and eventually became District 84.5. The remaining portion, which was east of the river would become District 85 and at that time it included most of present day Elmwood Park. In 1923, the creation of River Grove District 85.5 eliminated all areas outside of River Grove's boundaries.

Rhodes School District was established by a referendum in May of 1916 when voters decided to form an independent district because certain grades were being discontinued at the Rhodes School and those students would have to attend "Brick School" in Franklin Park which was located on the property where Hester Junior High School now stands. The original boundaries were east of the Soo Line Railroad, South of Grand and Fullerton along the Indian Boundary Line.

We are often asked why some children attend Rhodes School, and the children on the next block, or in some cases, the children next door attend River Grove School?

The reason is that the school district boundaries follow the line of an early Indian agreement which was established in 1816, when the Potawatomi Indians settled a strip of land 20 miles long and extending from Lake Michigan to Ottawa, Illinois, to the U.S. Government. The northern boundary of this strip divides River Grove on a rough diagonal. Rhodes School, District 84.5 boundaries in River Grove are as follows:

Elm Street	2437 east side only West side of Elm not in District 84.5 2420 (west) belongs to 85.5 to north on Elm
West Street	2448 west side/2595 east side
Spruce Street	2528 west side/2545 east side
Rhodes Street	2560 west side/2601 east side
Clarke Street	2616 west side/2639 east side
River Road	2666 west side
Leyden Avenue	All within District 84.5

Indian lore abounds in River Grove and the surrounding area. St. Joseph Cemetery on Thatcher Avenue north of Grand Avenue was the site of an Indian village around 1800. The pie-shaped wedge of land

bordered on the west by the Des Plaines River, on the southwest by Grand Avenue and on the northwest by the railroad track, was known as the La Framboise Reserve. It was granted to a French-Indian by the name of Joseph La Framboise, for aiding the white settlers and soldiers during the Fort Dearborn massacre.

Evans Field, east of Fullerton Avenue on Thatcher Avenue, was the site of another Indian village. Just east of Evans Field, there were five burial mounds built by prehistoric Indians which perhaps date to pre-Christian times.

Early settlers in the village spoke of seeing temporary Indian villages spring up from time to time along the banks of the Des Plaines River. Just north of River Grove, at Lawrence Avenue and East River Road, is the grave of Chief Che-Che-Pin-Qua, also known as Alexander Robinson, who is remembered as a peacemaker between Indians and settlers.

The District eventually became part of Cook County District 10 (prior to 1895) when the County officially re-numbered and re-organized school districts. District 10, then consisted of the "Brick School" in Franklin Park and Rhodes School which was the main school of the District.

In 1916 when Rhodes split from District 84 it was required to pay off much of the District 84 debts as well as the bonded debt which it did over a long period of time because it was a very poor school district.

Early School Revenue

School finance has changed much over the years. A major source of revenue for the early Rhodes was an ordinance in Leyden Township enacted in 1851 which stated that livestock not be allowed to run at large. A penalty of 10 cents for each cow, horse, mule or hog was collected and \$1.00 for each sheep or goat was to be assessed from the offending owner. The revenue was to be applied to school purposes.

How did Rhodes get its name?

In 1876, the plot of land south of Grand Avenue (then called Whiskey Point Road), and west of the Des Plaines River, was settled by the Rhodes and Clarke families, and became known as the Rhodes-Clarke subdivision. Richard S. Rhodes was a partner in the firm of Rhodes and McAlum Publishing Company, which was located at 230 W. Lake Street in Chicago. Apparently (although records are not clear on this point), the Rhodes family, who at that time lived in what is presently the 2500 block of Rhodes Avenue, donated some of the land to be used for a school, at the site of the present River Grove Bible Church. Rhodes remained on the original site until 1947 when a larger educational facility was needed. The Rhodes Board of Education (three members) purchased land at the present site where a four room school was built. This building, constructed under the supervision of Mrs. Alice Christ the first Rhodes Superintendent was the most modern facility available in that day. It included four classrooms, a cafeteria (current maintenance shop), an assembly room (present Board Room) where student plays and programs were conducted on a regular basis.

The moving day saw students transfer books and school supplies to the new school in red wagons. Members of the community also used trucks and cars to transfer equipment to the new school.

Rhodes began to grow quickly in the early fifties with the rapid growth in the River Grove area which was a pleasant community settled by men and their families returning from the Second World War. This

caused the School Board to construct several additions quickly to the original building to provide for the educational needs of the expanding families.

The Village of Melrose Park also experienced a great deal of growth of a commercial and industrial nature after the Second World War. The plant located at 2407 West North Avenue that presently houses a Zenith picture tube plant prior to the war manufactured parts for Buick. The plant was converted to tank manufacturing in the war and to accommodate the war efforts a large water main was brought down North Avenue. It was this supply of water that made the industrial and commercial development in the District become so inviting in the late 1950's and early 1960's. It is this area that gave Rhodes the beneficial tax base which has enabled the Board to keep taxes low over the years and yet provide the community with one of the best educational facilities in the state as well as an outstanding educational program.

The area of the District where Triton College is now located formerly had two trailer courts which were forced to relocate when the property was purchased for Triton College. During the days that the trailer courts were in operation, Rhodes School had a student population of almost 900 students.

Rhodes Today

The Board of Education has consistently sought ways to make Rhodes an outstanding educational institution in the Western Suburbs. The school facility is one of the most modern and up-to-date found anywhere in the United States. It employs the most modern provisions for school security. The building and its ten additions offer the best educational facilities for Science, Computer Education, Fine Arts, Athletics, Library and Media Center, etc. The classroom facilities are exceptionally modern and the Board, in the summer of 1989 completed the air conditioning of the facility.

The curriculum at Rhodes provides the best instruction possible for all levels of students. The District offers outstanding programs in Enrichment/Gifted Education, at one time serving as the Administrative Agent for the Leyden Triton Gifted programs. The District provides extensive remedial support and Special Education programs for any students that have need of such services. The students of Rhodes participate in a varied program which provides them with experience in the Fine Arts (Art, Band, General Music, and Chorus), Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM), Computer Coding, and World Language Spanish (Heritage and Introductory).

In addition to the solid core program, Rhodes provides students opportunities to participate in advanced placement/accelerated classes in the areas of algebra, biology, and world language. Students who complete these approved programs are eligible for advanced placement status upon entering High School.

Rhodes is a member of the Leyden Norridge Conference and has boys and girls participation in softball, basketball, volleyball, soccer, cross country, and scholastic bowl. In addition, the District has extensive club programming.

Rhodes Board of Education

The Rhodes Board consists of seven residents of the community who dedicate extensive amounts of their time to make sure that Rhodes is the best that it can be. These people receive no compensation with their reward being a school that serves the needs of the community.

The faculty and staff at Rhodes are very experienced, professional and a caring group of people who strive to provide the best possible education for all the students who attend Rhodes.

The Rhodes support staff makes the day to day operation of the District work in an efficient manner. This group of dedicated individuals run the Rhodes cafeteria, provide clerical and fiscal services to the District, clean and maintain the buildings and grounds and provide transportation services on a daily basis.

We at Rhodes are proud to serve the Village of River Grove and Melrose Park and look forward to serving the community for the next one hundred years!