Garfield and Arthur schools to celebrate 100th anniversaries

Posted on May 4, 2015

Arthur Elementary School was built in Cedar Rapids in 1914 and opened for the 1915 school year. The school, along with Garfield Elementary, will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary. (photo/Cindy Hadish)

By Cindy Hadish/Save CR Heritage

In the 1910s, Cedar Rapids was booming in both its economy and population, which resulted in an unprecedented number of schools being built to keep up with demand.

“A lot of young families were moving into the city,” said Cedar Rapids historian, Mark Stoffer Hunter, citing new and expanding industries, with plenty of job opportunities. “It was the largest school boom in Cedar Rapids’ history before the Baby Boom era.”
Garfield, Arthur and Hayes Elementary, and Grant High School were all built in 1914 and opened for the 1915 school year.

Garfield Elementary is celebrating its 100th anniversary this week. (photo/Cindy Hadish)

Two of those buildings, Garfield and Arthur, have been continuously used as schools by the Cedar Rapids School District for the past century and will celebrate their 100th anniversaries this week.

Both celebrations will be Thursday, May 7, 2015. Stoffer Hunter and Mayor Ron Corbett will attend school assemblies in the morning. An open house at both schools will be 4:30 to 7 p.m., with Stoffer Hunter speaking at 6 p.m. at Arthur, at 6:40 p.m. at Garfield and back to Arthur for a short walking tour at 6:50 p.m. Principal Angelia Hoyer said students will add contents to a time capsule to be opened in 25 years at Arthur School, 2630 B Ave
Hoyer said the public is invited to the open house for self-guided and guided tours of the building, exhibits on display, refreshments and opportunities to write a memory to share in the school’s guest book.

Former Principal Rick Netolicky will emcee the event at Garfield Elementary, 1201 Maplewood Dr. NE, which also will include building tours, food, activities, and a raffle on the playground.

For Nancy Raue, becoming a teacher at Garfield was a homecoming, of sorts.

Her grandfather, Godfrey Splichal, attended Garfield beginning in 1918. Raue’s mother and uncle also attended the school, as did she and her sister and brother.

“He was always proud of the fact that he and his brothers went to Garfield,” Raue said of her grandfather, who recalled the teacher translating his first name from the Czech “Bohumil” to Godfrey when he started there.

When she began teaching in 1989, many of her fellow teachers remembered Raue as a student, and some of those former educators will attend the anniversary celebration, she said.

“I could have taught at another school, but it was always my dream to teach at Garfield,” said Raue, who started as a fourth-grade teacher, and later taught kindergarten and now alternative kindergarten. “I have a passion for the kids – the Garfield kids – and I was one of them.”

Raue said she also appreciates the character of the school building, with hardwood floors and Egyptian architecture.
Stoffer Hunter said four architects were hired to design the four different schools.

“Each of these had a unique architectural style,” he said.

Each of the Cedar Rapids schools built in 1914 used a different architect.

(photo/Cindy Hadish)

Arthur utilized fortress/castle elements, while Garfield, with Egyptian-style columns, reflected the growing interest in Egypt at the time, Stoffer Hunter said.

Garfield and Arthur are just one mile apart in northeast Cedar Rapids.

The older portion of Hayes School, 1924 D St. SW, was demolished in 1982. The former Grant High School, 346 Second Ave. SW, became the Cedar Rapids Community School District’s
administrative office building and plans call for a future renovation as apartments.

Stoffer Hunter noted that the school district’s oldest building, the former Lincoln Elementary, 912 18th Ave. SW, dates back to 1910, but had not been used by the district for years.

Sanctuary Ministries of Cedar Rapids bought the building last year to use for its church.

Six more schools followed in subsequent years after 1915, Stoffer Hunter said, including four now used as middle schools.

“That’s a total of 10 new schools established in 10 years,” he said. The schools featured park-like settings for their playgrounds, he added, representing a new educational approach to offer students plenty of room to play.

Raue recalled playing on the playground, as well as kick-the-can and other games as a child in the neighborhood, known as Mound Farm.

“It’s just beautiful,” she said. “I feel like I’ve won the lottery every day. It’s just exciting to come to Garfield.”
Garfield Elementary in Cedar Rapids opened one century ago, featuring unique Egyptian-style architecture in a park-like setting. (photo/Cindy Hadish)

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