

Timeline – Historical Central School

1896 – Construction of the Central School Building by William Wille is completed. The stately white, wooden building is constructed in the Italianate style, and its features include a pitched roof and wooden cupola crowned with eight leaded glass windows. The one-room school house contains boys and girls cloakrooms.

1911 – Saint Paul's Lutheran Church is formed in the Central School. In the days before automobiles and paved roads, the trip from downtown Mount Prospect to St. John Lutheran Church on Linneman Road was an arduous journey, especially during the winter months. Several families decided to form a church closer to the downtown to accommodate the growing population of the fledging community. The Church first met in the Central School until it constructed a building on the northeast corner of Elm Street and Busse Avenue in 1912. Also in 1911, the Mount Prospect Improvement Association was formed and regularly met in 1911. The Association was comprised of prominent men in the community who saw to it that Mount Prospect was a desirable place to live and had progressive amenities and services.

1913 – The Mount Prospect Fire Department, then an all-volunteer organization, was established in the Central School. In this first meeting they wrote the constitution and bylaws and submitted them for consideration. They sat down again on November 8th of 1913 and adopted the constitution. They then elected C.D. Busse the First Chief; John Pohlman, Secretary; L.H. Haberkamp, Treasurer; and A.E. Busse Engineer. Herman Meyn, Christ Wille and Albert Wille were also members of the first Fire Department.

1917 – after the Village reached the 300 residents required by Cook County for Incorporation, the Mount Prospect Improvement Association voted to incorporate in the Central School.

1927 – As the “luxury community” of Mount Prospect began to become settled by well-to-do Chicago residents, the second Central School was constructed. This eight room brick building was constructed just east of the original school building, facing north toward Central Road. The original Central School was converted to a kindergarten, a staple in any traditionally German community. In the same year, the Mount Prospect Women's Club was formed in the Central School.

1930 – The Mount Prospect Women's Club began the first Public Library in the Central School in in this year. This “library” began as a cart of books that was wheeled out of a closet at the School. During the 1930s, the School became known simply as “Community Hall,” a testament to then varying number of activities held there. In addition to the home of the library, public events such as the first movie in Mount Prospect were held at the school.



1937 – The Central School building is purchased by the congregation of St. John’s Episcopal Church at a cost of \$750 to be used as its sanctuary. The building is moved to the Northeast corner of Thayer and Wille Streets at a cost of \$175 and undergoes extensive improvements and retrofitting, including the addition of a basement, to accommodate the congregation.

1954 – The population of Mount Prospect and the surrounding communities explodes. St. John’s constructs a new sanctuary. The Central School is converted to a multipurpose building that houses church offices and space for Sunday School classes.

1995 – St. John’s votes to raze the building. This motion was defeated by the work of Pastor Rev. H. Randolph Roome and the Mount Prospect Historical Society. Issues of building’s future were delayed by the death of Reverend Roome and Mount Prospect Historical Society President Paul Carlstedt.

2001 – St. John’s again contacts the Historical Society to discuss the fate of the Central School building, by this time beginning to show its age. Long discussions ensue. The congregation is again planning to expand its facilities, but recognizes the historic value of the building.

2002 – Following lengthy negotiations, the Mount Prospect Historical Society agrees to purchase the Central School from St. John’s for \$1 with the agreement that Historical Society will move the building.

2008 – After over six years of arduous fundraising and multiple location proposals, the Central School is moved the Mount Prospect Historical Society’s museum campus on the Southeast corner of Busse Avenue and Maple Street. The Village of Mount Prospect constructs a foundation and full basement for additionally Society storage needs. The move is executed by Dillabaugh, Inc., and the associated costs of the building move exceed \$170,000. Additionally, the Society receives a \$20,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to begin restoration efforts. Also in 2008, the U.S. economy nearly collapses and enters a lengthy recession, complicating future fundraising campaigns.



2009 – Peterson Roofing of Mount Prospect donates the complete replacement of the roof of the building, which was rapidly deteriorating. This work included some restoration of the building’s cupola. Also in 2009, CNM Development of contracted to perform the first phases of the building restoration with the funds obtained by DCEO. The work includes asbestos abatement, removal of non-historic material, salvage of historic material, and exterior restoration of the building eastern façade. Additionally, a time capsule is laid beneath the front steps of the building.

2010 – SRBL Architects complete the final set of architectural renderings and instruction for the completion of the Central School’s restoration. By 2010, the the Historical Society’s Garden Committee completed the restoration of the museum campus’ historic garden areas, which were disturbed by the building’s move. By this time, the concrete walkways and access points, allowing for full ADA compliance, are installed.