

Lindsay School offered therapy services, education for children

by [Luther Granquist](#) // September 10th, 2010



In 1929 the Ramsey County Committee of the recently organized Minnesota Association for Crippled Children urged the City of St. Paul to keep faith with children with disabilities by building a new school for them. In those days St. Paul Public Schools were under the direct control of city government. Members of the committee, in particular Wilfred F. Johnson, collaborated with school officials and medical advisors from Gillette State Hospital, Children's Hospital and the University of Minnesota to design a building "that would be a model for its type." The building, located just west of downtown at Pleasant and Sherman, cost \$200,000. Part of the funding was donated by Mary Helen Lindsay from the Weyerhaeuser forest products family.

On Nov. 2, 1931 the St. Paul Dispatch printed a front-page picture and story about 28 children with disabilities exploring their new one-story school with cork floors, rails on the walls, manual training and home economics rooms, a gymnasium and a swimming pool. The Mary Helen Lindsay School, as it was named, also had clinic rooms for use by therapists and consulting physicians, an "Alpine light room" for ultraviolet treatment, and a large room with beds for mandatory rest periods. Later that month, 5,000 people attended the school's open house.

Soon after it opened, the school had 50 children with orthopedic disabilities and 16 with cardiac problems. To be eligible to attend, children had to be recommended by a physician, examined and approved by the school's orthopedic consultant, and determined "educable" (an IQ of 50 or above) by the school's psychologist. The school district received state aid of \$250 per student per year, an amount that finally increased in 1949 to \$400 per year. As the school population grew to exceed its 100-student capacity, two portable classrooms were added.

The Lindsay School provided physical, occupational, and speech therapy services, as well as regular consultation by physicians, including Dr. Carl Chatterton of Gillette State Hospital. Through the years the school faced the challenge of providing and coordinating both the school district's regular academic program and the therapy services the children needed.

The need for advocacy continued throughout Lindsay's history. In 1929, pressure from a parent group had

prompted the St. Paul City Council to build the school. In 1974, shortly before the children were moved to new programs at Como Park Elementary and the Child Development Center (Bridgeview School), both the Lindsay School PTA and Dr. Daniel Halpern from the University of Minnesota stressed the need for additional therapy services for the children.

Lindsay School was torn down in 1978.

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/ A 1958 bulletin from the Minnesota Department of Education, "Meeting the Needs of the Crippled Child in Minnesota," is included in With an Eye to the Past on the council's website at www.mnddc.org/past/pdf/50s/58/58-MNC-DEPTED.pdf