

Historical Clippings

Three Lakes Museum

February 2023

Celebrating Basketball and Three Lakes

Basketball and Three Lakes both had their beginnings at the end of the 19th century, 120 plus years ago. As the popularity of the game spread across the country, Three Lakes was eventually playing the game at the high school level too. Blue Jays can take pride in the fact that both boys and girls participated in the sport. It must have been an exciting time!

Today Three Lakes is proud Blue Jay country. At the girls February 3rd game and the boys February 6th game, 100 years of basketball history in our community will be recognized. Come and celebrate this historical milestone with our teams and basketball alumni.

One hundred years ago during the 1922-23 school year, the Three Lakes schools were in transition. The two story wood frame building, located where the Demmer Library now stands, had served the town since 1894. A contract for demolition had been agreed to and the old wooden school was sold for \$5 to Eddie Danowski who dismantled it piece by piece and resold the materials.



It was being replaced by a new modern brick building built where our school stands today. This school had classrooms for 12 grades, a band room, a home economics room, and a gymnasium in the basement. The gym doubled as the cafeteria and was affectionately called "the Pit" with a wooden floor installed by the shop class and the basketball team. On the top floor was the Principal's office, the library, and art room.

As amazing as the fact is that the wood floor was installed with help from students is the fact that it lasted until 1976 and only had to be replaced due to water damage. That hardwood hosted years of basketball and community events.

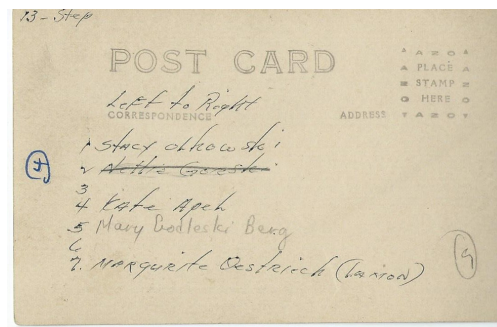
It is believed that the completion date for the new brick school was to have begun at the start of the school year in the fall of 1922. For whatever reasons, students first entered the building in the fall of 1923. But the basketball craze sweeping the country had already reached Three Lakes and we had teams ready to take on neighboring communities before that new gym was ready.



Like many small high schools across the country, basketball was the "big sport" at Three Lakes High School since its beginning in 1922. This picture of the first basketball team was discovered by Mike Gorski, now of Illinois. Members of that first team were from left: Billy Anderson, Walter Uhl, Mike Gorski, Davy Farmer, Everett Nelson, Alex Olkowski, and John Rychlock. Not shown was the coach, Chalmer Davies. The team played five games that first season and won three.



The girls team postcard is from the Gene Step collection



School records from 100 years ago are incomplete, like a jigsaw puzzle missing pieces. Some of what we know about that first season of basketball is from museum archives and stories in *The Pine the Plow and the Pioneer, vol 2*. Newspaper articles show games were played on the road, but where did they practice and play at home while they waited to move into the new school during the 1922-23 season?

Local historian Les Anderson was able to find the following December 1922 *Eagle River Review* articles to provide a few more details.

Basket Ball Teams Win.
Both basket ball teams from the Eagle River high school won their games last Friday evening with major scores. The regular team of boys who played Elcho in that village cleaned up with a score of 64 to 15. The Freshmen girls played at Three Lakes and won by a 32 to 5 score. The regulars will play Friday evening here against Argonne, while the second team plays Three Lakes.

Eagle River Review 13 Dec 1922

TOOK BOTH THE GAMES
Eagle River Teams Trim Argonne and Three Lakes in Good Games of Basket Ball Friday Evening.
With victories going to both basket ball teams last Friday night in the opera house in this village, it now gives them both a hundred percent record so far this year. So far the first team has been playing brilliant ball, and has found no team anywhere near their equal. In the Friday night game Argonne went down to defeat by a score of 39 to 2. The second team of Eagle River played the same evening, and cleaned up Three Lakes 17 to 12. It is said that a game between Crandon and Eagle River will be played here this evening.

Eagle River Review, 20 Dec 1922

There was a scrappy preliminary between the Three Lakes High and Eagle High's second team that resulted in another victory for the local school by a score of 17 to 12. During the first period the teams played to a tie, 6 to 6, with Three lakes having the better of it in teamwork and snappy playing. But Eagle came back strong in the latter half pulling out by a five point margin when time was called.
It was Three Lakes' first basket ball game with an outside team, the four year high school having just been organized in the neighboring town this year. They have a good little team and when Eagle goes down there for a return game they will have to hump right along to make it a win.

Eagle River Review, 21 Dec 1922

1922 area high school basketball included
Three Lakes
Eagle River 1&2
Crandon
Argonne
Elcho

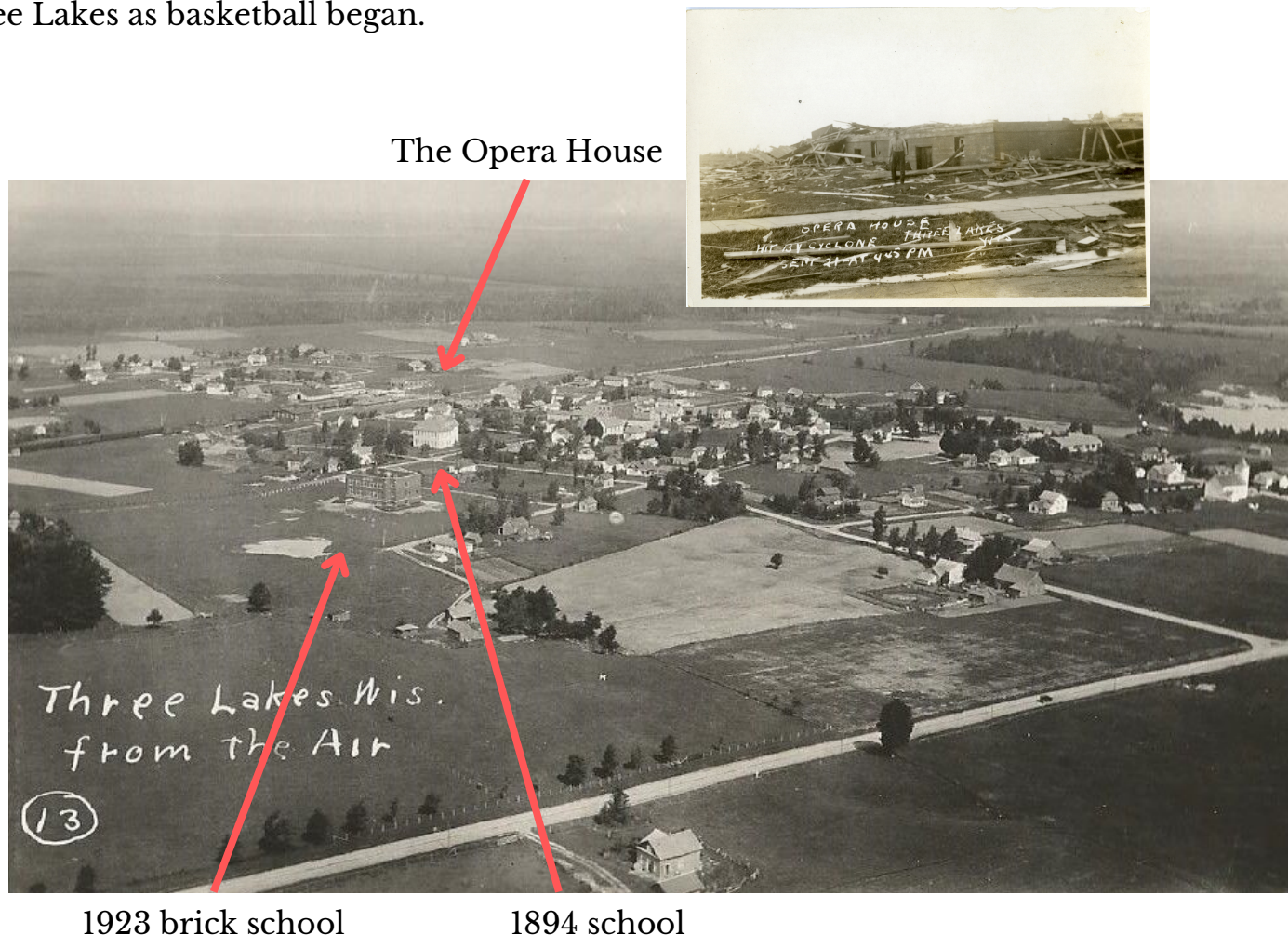
The December 20 article mentions playing at the opera house probably referencing a location in Eagle River.

Three Lakes also had a building called the Opera House that hosted community events. The December 13 article states the girls played in Three Lakes, and the December 21 article states Eagle River would play a return game in Three Lakes. When looking at the possibilities in town where a game of basketball could be played in December, the Opera House may have been the only one. That building, located in the empty Loonery lot next to the old railroad tracks, was lost to the tornado in September 1924.



From the Archives

So much to see in aerial photos. This image can be dated fairly accurately to 1922. The 1894 school has not been demolished and the 1923 school appears near completion. This would be Three Lakes as basketball began.



An easier read of the December 1922 articles

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