

Elisabeth M. Bennet –

Educator, Innovator, Heroine, Role Model



In 1961 the Manchester Board of Education voted to rename Barnard Junior High School as the Elisabeth M. Bennet Middle School in recognition of the extraordinary contributions of Miss Bennet to the thousands of Manchester students who were her pupils during her 50 years of service to the Manchester school system.

The Sculpture Project is celebrating the legacy of Elisabeth Bennet by raising funds to create a life-size bronze sculpture of Miss Bennet to be placed in front of the school that bears her name.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Born in Danbury, CT on January 22, 1881 Elisabeth Bennet attended Vassar College and was graduated from Danbury Normal School in 1909. She earned a bachelor of science degree at New Britain Teacher's College and a master's degree at Massachusetts State Teacher's College.

Never married, Miss Bennet devoted her life to the students and teachers of Manchester.

EDUCATOR

Elisabeth brought her extensive training in education to Manchester in 1909, serving the school system for 50 years before retiring at the age of 70. During her tenure she held the positions of:

- Supervisor and principal of the Ninth District School (1909-1917).
- Principal of Barnard School beginning in 1917 with the additional duties of supervision of Nathan Hale, Barnard, Highland Park and South Schools beginning in 1945.

PIONEER/INNOVATOR

Elisabeth was an education pioneer who was credited with being the first to initiate many innovative programs in the Manchester public school system. Her "firsts" included:

- Establishing a school library.
- Promoting a manual training program.
- Using visual aids in the form of a movie projector for educational purposes.
- Starting music appreciation classes for elementary pupils.
- Promoting the first recreational facilities for Manchester youth, securing space for boys' recreational activities and organizing dancing classes.
- Stimulating interest in art and pottery.

HEROINE

When a fire raged through the Ninth District School in 1913 Miss Bennet is credited with successfully evacuating 1,100 students and teachers in spite of incurring personal injury.

ROLE MODEL

Throughout her career Elisabeth was a role model for her teachers as well as her students.

In the words of Dr. William E. Buckley, author of *A New England Pattern* (p. 202) "She won and held the respect, confidence and affection of all her teachers for whom she was a tower of strength that stood foursquare to all the winds that blew."

The statue of Elisabeth Bennet will be the second in a series of life-size bronze sculptures commemorating notable Manchester citizens.