

*Celebrating Our History*  
**The Sculpture Project**

MANCHESTER, CT

**Elisabeth M. Bennet**  
VISIONARY EDUCATOR



January 22, 1881-September 1, 1959





IN MEMORY OF ELISABETH M. BENNET FOR HER HEROIC SERVICE  
TO THE CHILDREN OF MANCHESTER AND WITH GRATITUDE TO  
THE EDUCATORS WHO GRACE OUR HALLS TODAY

*Celebrating Our History*  
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MANCHESTER, CT

Elisabeth Montague Bennet was born January 22, 1881 in Danbury, Connecticut to Archibald and Fannie Mae Lewis. She was the oldest of her siblings: Robert Nathaniel, Sara Reba, and Helen Isabel.

Elisabeth was the daughter of hard-working people. Her father was a carpenter and her grandfather was also a craftsman, a joiner and millwright; another grandfather was a blacksmith. Elisabeth was a first generation Scottish-American on her father's side. Her mother helped run a boarding house that her grandparents had established.

Elisabeth M. Bennet died September 1, 1959 after a long and devoted commitment to the betterment of the minds of children. It is fair to say that she fully honored the sacrifices and hard work of her ancestors.

*Research by Noreen Cullen*



# Elisabeth M. Bennet: The Life of an Extraordinary Woman

By Claudia D. Kuehl



Town's folk watch helplessly as the Pola Store and adjacent buildings burn along the north side of School Street. The 3- story building at the far left is Keith's Furniture Store. To add insult to injury Hose Company #4 was reduced to ashes. The entire 32 room Ninth District schoolhouse was destroyed in a matter of one hour.

October 23, 1913, 2 PM

## The Start of a Legend

Elisabeth Montague Bennet began her 42 years of service to Manchester in 1909 as a supervisor of teachers at the East School, the flagship of the Ninth District, located at School and Main. In those days, young women who were enrolled at the New Britain Normal School taught students in grades K-6, with supervisors providing on-the-job training and oversight. Miss Bennet's starting salary in the 1909-1910 school year was \$600 for 38 weeks of work.

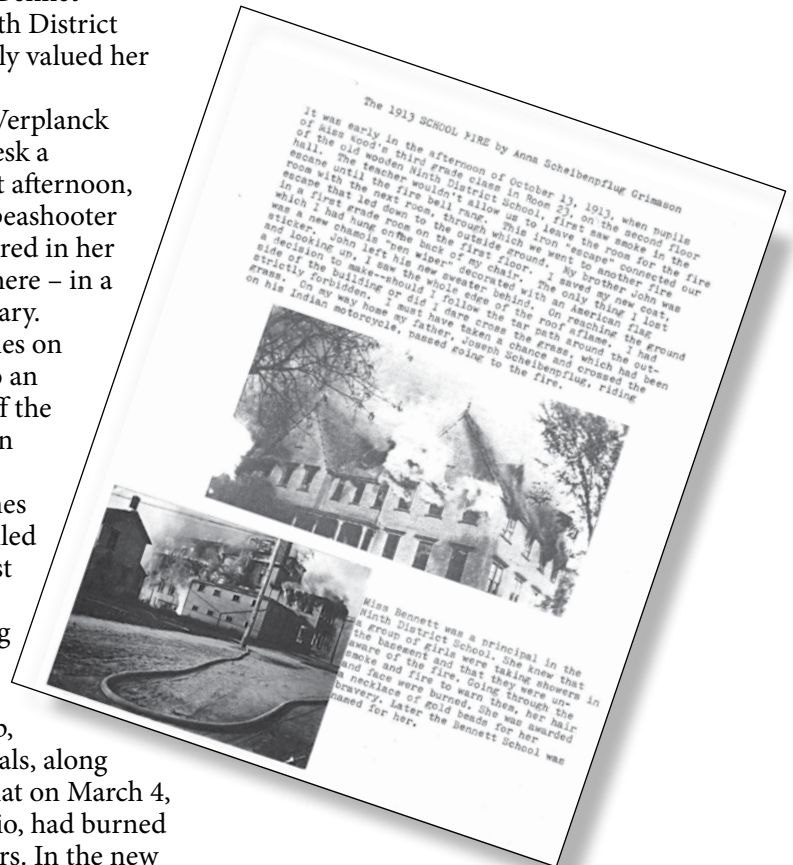


Four years later, in the summer of 1913, Miss Bennet was promoted to principal of the East School. Ninth District School Superintendent Fred "Zip" Verplanck clearly valued her competence and character.

On a balmy Thursday, October 23, 1913, Mr. Verplanck popped into Miss Bennet's office and left on her desk a dictionary he had bought for the school. Later that afternoon, Miss Bennett scolded a group of boys for using a peashooter in class, then sent them on their way. One reappeared in her office moments later. Fire! he said, and told her where – in a book storage room that some casually called a library.

Miss Bennet dashed to the room and saw flames on the wall behind a desk and wastebasket. She ran to an auxiliary fire alarm box, broke the glass, and set off the general alarm, which sounded in every firehouse in town. In less than three minutes, the building was empty. Within five minutes it was engulfed in flames and impenetrable by firefighters, who tried and failed to tame the blaze from outside. In an hour, the East School was ashes.

What a school it had been. With two sprawling full stories, a partial third story, and a basement, the East School had been the largest wooden building in Manchester – and a recognized firetrap, constructed of pine coated in shellac. School officials, along with the rest of the horrified nation, were aware that on March 4, 1908, a mainly wooden school in Collinwood, Ohio, had burned to the ground, killing 172 students and two teachers. In the new school year that started in September 1908, the Ninth School



District Committee added auxiliary fire alarms to every floor of the East School and installed iron fire escapes outside to evacuate those on the upper floors. "Plans for exterior escapes had been made and submitted to the contractors previous to the Collinwood disaster," an annual report by the Selectmen and School Visitors stressed – but those plans were revised and moved forward rapidly after Collinwood. When Miss Bennet arrived at the East School in September 1909, the iron fire escapes were in use in every fire drill.

They got a lot of use. Mr. Verplanck insisted on frequent drills, and when Miss Bennet became principal, she obliged. Since the school year was young and students and teachers were in unfamiliar rooms, she staged drill after drill in the weeks and days before the fire.

On Friday, October 24, 1913, the *Manchester Half Weekly Herald* devoted three paragraphs to a scoop: an interview with Miss Bennet while the fire still raged. (The paper misspelled her name, an error common throughout her career.)

Here is the verbatim text:

*Miss Bennett's Great Opportunity  
She Rose to the Occasion and then Quietly Disappeared*

*While the fire was burning, a sad-faced woman stood alone in a private room in the High school building watching the fire and the crowd from the window. Here a Herald man found her, depressed and silent. She was Miss Elizabeth M. Bennett, head supervisor in the burned building, whose presence of mind and prompt action had won the lives of nearly a thousand children from smoke and fire. Half an hour before she had been sitting quietly in her office in the burning building. Since then the supreme moments of her life had been lived. She had led her brood to safety, calmly and surely, and now with difficulty she controlled her emotions.*

*At first Miss Bennett declined to talk, but at length she told in a few words her simple story. How the boy had run into her office with the news of the fire; how she had run to the library and confirmed the news; how she had instantly sounded the general alarm, cutting her hand on the glass front of the box; how she had remained in the building until the last child was out.*

*Just then someone burst into the room exclaiming, "Your own home is on fire!" meaning the Eldridge house where she roomed. Donning her wraps she hastened away to save her belongings. Fortunately the incipient fire in the Eldridge house was quickly extinguished and Miss Bennett was not called upon to undergo another ordeal.*

In 1953, Miss Bennet spoke to the *Manchester Evening Herald* for an article written by Harold E. Turkington marking the fortieth anniversary of the fire. She said that a week before the fire she had lectured a boy who talked during a drill. The boy told her he had said to the fellow in front of





him that it was only a fire drill, not a real fire. "My remarks to him were to carry out every drill as if it were a real fire, because none of us ever knew when it would be the real thing," Miss Bennet said.

She related the peashooter story and what happened next.

"After I saw the fire, I immediately tapped the glass on the box alarm and put in the general alarm," she said. "My finger was cut slightly by the glass but not seriously. Why, the teachers themselves were not aware that this was the real thing. One teacher started to come out of her room, but I clapped my hands at her and told her to get out with the children because this was a 'real' fire drill," she recalled.

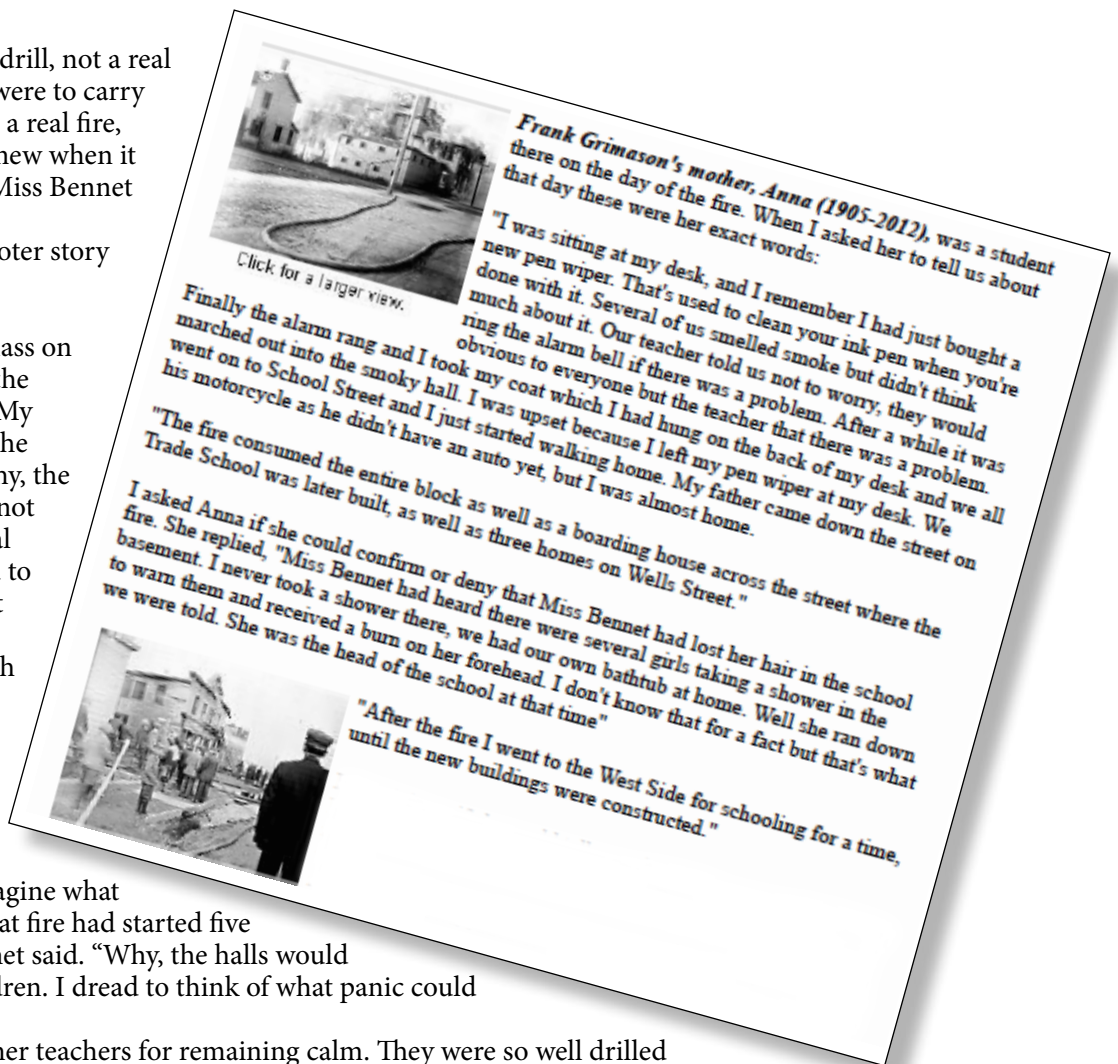
The article noted that the fire was discovered at 2:10 pm. Recess was to start at 2:15. "Can you imagine what could have happened if that fire had started five minutes later?" Miss Bennet said. "Why, the halls would have been filled with children. I dread to think of what panic could have resulted."

Miss Bennet credited her teachers for remaining calm. They were so well drilled in the routine that they were able to handle the unexpected. One student fainted and was efficiently carried out. Adults in the third-floor gym had to change the escape route for children when fire blocked the usual egress. Once outside, teachers had to restrain some students from rushing back in to rescue their belongings. A coat, a pen-wipe, an eraser: such items at that moment were everything to the frantic little ones. And to the not-so-little; forty years later, Mr. Verplanck still recalled the anger of a mother who called him after the fire, demanding to know who would pay for her son's cap.

Unlike the Collinwood fire in 1908 or the Hartford Circus Fire in 1944, the fire that felled the East School was shocking but not a tragedy. Nobody died. About 900 children attended the school on an average day, and they all made it home. In an editorial published the day after the fire, the *Hartford Courant* praised the teachers, the fire drills, and the "ample" exits (by way of the fire escapes) and concluded: "Taken all in all, it is a cheerful story, and today there is thanksgiving and gratitude in the homes of South Manchester in place of inconsolable grief."

One week after the fire, students were back in class, reassigned to other Ninth District schools that went on double sessions to accommodate them. In April 1915, a new school opened on the site at School and Main. It was called Barnard, and it was built of bricks. Miss Bennet was principal.

In September 1921, when a new school, Nathan Hale, opened in the Ninth District, Miss Bennet became principal there as well.



## From the Beginning

Miss Bennet was born in Danbury on January 22, 1881. Her father had emigrated from Scotland; her mother, Connecticut-born, was most recently from New York City. Elisabeth was the eldest of four children; the youngest, Helen, was born prematurely in 1890 and lived just seven days.

After graduation from Danbury High School, Miss Bennet became a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Danbury, where she was responsible for teaching all subjects to children in grades 1 through 8. She then taught grades 3 and 4 in Danbury City schools. After six years of hometown teaching, she briefly attended Vassar College, and then enrolled in the Danbury Normal School. She was graduated in 1909 and began her auspicious career as a Manchester educator.

The Ninth School District was governed independently of the rest of Manchester's schools from 1896 to 1932, when the schools were consolidated. That independence created an environment that encouraged innovators like Mr. Verplanck and Miss Bennet to try new approaches. Further, although the money to run the district came from the town's taxpayers, the Cheney Brothers were generous in their financial support of programs, buildings, and staff. Indeed, after the East School burned down, the Cheney's paid to construct the replacement school, Barnard, plus a new recreation building. For the children and grandchildren of Cheney Mills employees, only the best would do.

- ◆ **1899-1909** Miss Bennet taught in Danbury in the rural school, teaching all subjects for grades 1 through 8, and in the city schools, grades 3 and 4. After six years of teaching, she attended Vassar College, and then the State Normal School in Danbury.
- ◆ **1909** Elisabeth graduated from Danbury Normal School and came to Manchester as a teacher to train other educators.
- ◆ **1909-1913** Miss Bennet served as supervisor of the Ninth District School.
- ◆ **1913** Miss Bennet became principal of the Ninth District School.
- ◆ **October 23, 1913** Miss Bennet was credited with saving many lives in the worst fire in Manchester's history, the Ninth District School Fire.
- ◆ **1915** Miss Bennet became principal of the newly built Barnard School (which replaced the Ninth District School).



Education Square Photo: Sinch Ofiara

**20 MORE SHOPPING DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS**  
**Put Red Cross Seals on all Christmas Mail**

### MORE RED CROSS SEALS NEEDED FOR MANCHESTER

We Have Already Bought 60,000 Stamps and 20,000 More Are to Be Disposed of.

Several weeks ago, the annual campaign for the sale of Red Cross Christmas seals was started in Manchester. Miss Elizabeth M. Bennet, supervisor of the Barnard school, took charge of the seals as she did last year. She received 60,000 stamps and within a few days practically the whole supply had been distributed among the school children of the town and the local stores. The school children have been active in the sale of the stamps and already about \$160 has been turned in. This means that 16,000 of the seals have been sold. Most of the \$160 was turned in by the school children, although a part of the \$160 came from sales at the stores.

**Sale Started Early.**  
The sale of the Christmas seals was started earlier than usual this year, and it was desired to have the stamps on Christmas packages sent to the soldiers "over there" and their Christmas mail had to be sent by November 15. Miss Bennet has received an extra 20,000 stamps and a second drive will be started on the resumption of school after the Thanksgiving vacation, which closes at noon Monday. Conditions brought about by the war have caused a spread of tuberculosis among the warring nations in Europe and for that reason it is desired to sell more of the Red Cross Christmas seals than ever this year. Many of our soldiers are "over there" now and others are to follow them and they will be subjected to the same conditions as the soldiers of the other nations. The disease must be fought and every precaution taken to ward it off and the Red Cross will need large sums of money for carrying on this work.

**Money to Stay Here.**  
From 85 to 90 per cent of the receipts from the seals in Manchester will go to the open air school. Tubercular children do not attend the school, but those who are anemic and undernourished and therefore liable to become victims of the disease. For that reason, the open air measure is considered a preventive the Red Cross Christmas seals goes to it. The ten or 15 per cent remaining goes to the American Red Cross association. Last year there was such a big sale of the stamps in Manchester that 90 per cent went to the open air school and it seems more than likely that the same will be true this year.



Those employees were mostly immigrants who brought a strong work ethic to their jobs. Miss Bennet's parents had modeled that same ethic. Her father devoted his working life to carpentry and furniture, and her mother helped to run and then ran a boarding house established by her parents. Miss Bennet, who had thrived in school, no doubt identified with the children of the Ninth District and made it her mission to help them thrive, too, not only in academics but also in arts, crafts, sports, and other pursuits that can bring joy.

Miss Bennet was the first Manchester educator to show films to students. Worthwhile educational films were hard to find, but Cheney Brothers resources eventually came through, providing titles like *Steel*, *Volcanoes*, and *Daniel Boone*. Children from other schools walked to Nathan Hale for the monthly showings. A child uninspired by *Coast Guards* or *Christmas Seals* might still enjoy the outing.

Miss Bennet has also been credited with establishing the first school library in Manchester. The reality appears to be more nuanced. Many elementary schools had small libraries, but most if not all of the books they offered were loaned by Manchester's public library system. Miss Bennet's library, which she organized in the basement of Barnard in 1927 for junior high school students, was a permanent collection that she created, catalogued, and populated with donated books.



1923 photo of Mr. Verplanck and Miss Bennet, who served on the Educational Committee during Manchester's centennial celebration.

## BARNARD SCHOOL HAS PLAY ROOM.

January 11, 1916

### Selectmen Pay \$14,418 in Bills —Local Notes.

Special to The Courant.)  
MANCHESTER, Tuesday, Jan. 11.

Johanna Hannivan of Buckland and Manuel August of South Manchester were married Saturday, taking a trip out of town for the ceremony and not telling anybody about it, particularly the bride's father, but when he did find out, Oh My! He was hot clear through and through. Mrs. August was rather dubious about going home. Buckland is not the most thickly populated place in Manchester and there is no police protection, but they decided to give it a trial. They did, but instead of father waiting with open arms, as they do in novels, he was waiting with a club, at least Mrs. August told Chief Gordon so yesterday morning and then told others that it was an ax that he had. She just wanted to get her clothes, she told the chief and had no particular love for getting cut or beaten up, so she did not go in. She wanted the chief to go after her clothes, but the chief told her to resort to legal proceedings to get them.

#### Play Room Opened.

A play room for boys in South Manchester was opened in the basement of the Barnard School last night, bringing to a head a plan that Miss Elizabeth Bennett, a supervisor in the Ninth District, has had under way for several weeks, as told in "The Courant" some time ago. Miss Bennett has been giving a lot of attention to boys who attend the Ninth District Schools and has a great influence over them. About two years ago she opened up her own home for the boys to gather and play games, in this way keeping them off the street and away from harm. The rooms in her home were not large enough to carry out the work as she desired and others were interested in the project. As a result the play room was opened last night. It is equipped with games that boys can play and the hours that it will be opened as at present decided upon are from 6:45 to 9:45 each evening. Teachers in the school will take turns in attending the boys while they are at play.

*She had some good practices that made a lot of sense to me even as a young boy. She kept the boys and the girls separate from one another in the classroom. The girls occupied the top floor of the school building facing Vine St. and the boys occupied the ground floor. Many of our (boys') teachers were men like Charlie Potter, Mr. Miller and Charles Perry. We also had boy students that, had the term been used then, would have been considered Special Ed students, and surprisingly they were tutored by two rather tough but respected ladies, Mrs. Bernice Maher and Mrs. Ruth Bonney. On rare occasions we'd join forces with the girls. One case in particular was the year we performed Gilbert & Sullivan's, The Mikado.*

*I have many fond memories of Elisabeth Bennet.*

Dick Jenkins, former Barnard student



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- ◆ **1916** Playroom opened for boys to gather and play games under teacher supervision.
- ◆ **1921** Miss Bennet became principal of Nathan Hale School.
- ◆ **1923** Miss Bennet served on the Town's Centennial Committee
- ◆ **1927** Miss Bennet organized the first school library in the basement of the Barnard School with donations from her own library, and by soliciting volumes from her friends. She also generously donated her summer vacation time to the cataloguing of this new project. The library was refurbished and named The Elisabeth M. Bennet Library in 1952.
- ◆ **1937** Elisabeth earned a bachelor of science degree at New Britain Teacher's College.

**CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE WHICH ARRANGED MANCHESTER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



**MANCHESTER CENTENNIAL WORKERS**

Front row, left to right—Elizabeth M. Bennett, Harriet Condon, Mrs. Clara Rudcliffe, Miss Anna Ward, Miss Lella M. Church, Mrs. Emma Lyons Nettleton, Mrs. George Borst, Mrs. A. L. Crowell.

Second row—Robert Reid, John Spillane, Fred Hills, Edward F. Taylor, Robert V. Treat, William Knoffis, Clifford D. Cheney, Joseph P. Lamb, U. J. Lupien, Samuel Massey, Morris Hansen, George Kahney, Arthur E. Bowers, George H. Howe, William Taylor.

Third row—Mathias Spels, Russell Hathaway, A. F. Howes, Philip Cheney, Oliver P. Toop, Wells Strickland, Frank D'Amico, Lawrence W. Cass, Walter Olson.

Fourth row—Thomas J. Quish, Fred T. Blish, Earl G. Seaman, Edward Ballsieper, F. A. Verplanck, Charles McCann, Horace B. Cheney, C. Elmore Watkins, William Robertson.

**THREE-DAY CELEBRATION OF TOWN'S HISTORY TAKES PLACE**

Eventful Days, Local Great Parades, Fireworks, Concerts, Historical Exhibitions

**INDIANS IN NATURAL HISTORY TO TAKE PART**

MANCHESTER'S centennial and the 265th year of its future has been authorized residents to the home town, bring here men and women, events of interest from early the celebration and the hospital most cordial by all who will.

**EFFORT TO CREATE SEPARATE SOCIETY** Manchester, Once Part of Hartford, Made Long RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF MANCHESTER

**HEADS CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE OF TOWN**

Other things Miss Bennet loved also made their way into her students' orbit. Nathan Hale had no piano; she raised money to buy a Steinway grand. She gave flowers from her garden to her teachers to brighten their classrooms. She loved to feed people. Barnard was built without a cafeteria, as students were expected to walk home for lunch. Miss Bennet sympathized with the children who couldn't go home and had to bring a cold lunch in a sack. On chilly days, she would treat them to milk and hot cocoa. Another kindness: When a child became ill at school, she would drive him or her home.

She was described as tall and stern-faced, striking fear into many students and many a new teacher. She belied her appearance with kindness and support. "She won and held the respect, confidence and affection of all her teachers," wrote Dr. William E. Buckley (for whom Buckley school is named) in *A New England Pattern*, a history of Manchester published in 1973, Manchester's Sesquicentennial year. She also had the unwavering regard of Mr. Verplanck and, later, of Arthur H. Illing, who became superintendent when Mr. Verplanck retired.



"I remember her from when I attended Highland Park School. She was a very nice lady. We knew she was coming when we saw her faded green 1947 Hudson."

- George Beauregard



For many years this bench sat outside the office of Principal Elisabeth M. Bennet. The bench was made in 1915 by the Heywood Wakefield Co. of Boston and was among the school furniture that was supplied for the Barnard School Building, built in 1915 as part of Education Square.

The bench is part of the Manchester Historical Society's permanent collection.

Elisabeth Bennet believed that children needed recreational activities to flourish. So she was gratified to serve sixteen years on the Ninth District Recreation Committee. The committee benefited adults, too. Notably, it oversaw the Recreation Center's creation and conduct of the Thanksgiving Day cross-country run. In her last year on the committee, 1931-32, a local boy, and impressive athlete, Joe McCluskey, won for the second time.



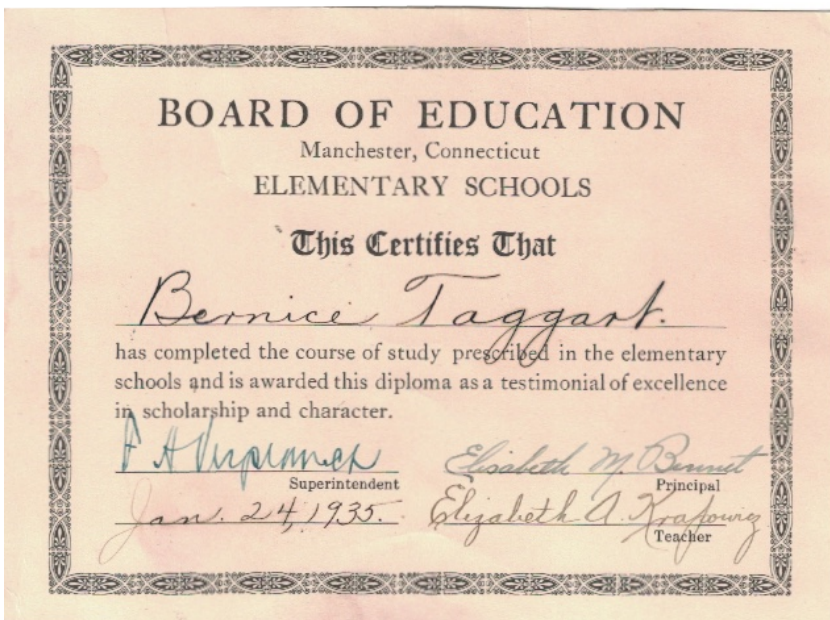
## A Born Leader

Manchester and the State of Connecticut gave Miss Bennet many opportunities to lead. During World War I, the War Bureau seated her on the committee overseeing war-related school projects. Students sold War Savings Stamps and formed a Junior Red Cross and a Junior Food Army. In 1923, as the town prepared to mark its Centennial, Miss Bennet served on the Educational Committee for the celebration. The only other members were Manchester's superintendents – Mr. Verplanck and Alfred F. Howes.

Given her interest in recreation, Miss Bennet was the perfect fit to serve 16 years on the Ninth District Recreation Committee. The committee oversaw the creation of the Recreation Center and the conduct of the Thanksgiving Day cross-country run. In Miss Bennet's last year on the committee, 1931-32, a former Barnard student, Joe McCluskey, won the road race for the second time. Miss Bennet also served for many years on the executive committee of the Manchester chapter of the American Red Cross.

Miss Bennet advised her teachers to keep on learning, and she set a grand example. In the summer of 1931, she began simultaneous undergraduate and graduate-level studies in education. Over the next nine summers, she took extension courses from New York University, Harvard, and Trinity, and she studied on campus at Hyannis State Teachers College while living in a summer cottage on Cape Cod. In 1937, she was awarded a bachelor's degree in education from the New Britain Teachers College, and in August 1940 she earned a Master of Education from Hyannis. She was 59 years old.

- ◆ **1940** Miss Bennet earned her master's degree from Massachusetts State Teacher's College.
- ◆ **1951** Elisabeth retired at the age of 70 after 42 years of service.
- ◆ **1952** The Barnard School library was refurbished and renamed The Elisabeth M. Bennet Library.
- ◆ **September 1, 1959** Elisabeth M. Bennet died at the age of 78.
- ◆ **1959** Barnard Junior High School was renamed Bennet Junior High School and today is known as Bennet Academy.
- ◆ **September 14, 2023** Statue of Elisabeth M. Bennet was dedicated on the lawn of Bennet Academy and given to the Town of Manchester by The Sculpture Committee



20 1932—THE PRICE & LEE CO.'S

Supt.—Fred A. Verplanck, office 1146 Main, S.M.  
 High School Committee—Chairman, Howell Cheney;  
 William Buckley, Rev. Watson Woodruff, Mrs. Lillian Bowers, Mrs. Sarah Healy.  
 Supt. of High School—Fred A. Verplanck.

Schools, Location and Principals.  
 High School—1146 Main, S.M. Clarence P. Quimby.  
 Barnard School—10 Vine, S.M. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
 Franklin School—1151 Main, S.M. Arthur E. Illing.  
 Nathan Hale School—160 Spruce, S.M. Huldah A. Butler.  
 Lincoln School—Main, S.M. Ruth S. Crampton.  
 Bunce School—Oleott, S.M. Ruth S. Crampton.  
 Washington School—94 Cedar, S.M. Leonora S. Hanna.  
 Special Teachers—Helen M. Smith, E. Marion Dorward,  
 Charlotte G. Gillette, Henry H. Miller, Blanche Feder, Wilfred J. Clarke, Hazel Lutz, Mary Bowen.  
 Supervisor of Kindergartens—Ella L. Washburn.  
 Nurse—Sophia J. Ferderber.  
 Dental Hygienist—Hazel E. Gess.

Districts 1-8.  
 Board of School Visitors—Edward J. Murphy, Chairman; Sec., Russell Hathaway; Elmore Watkins, James M. Burke, Mrs. Andrew Healey, Harold Alvord.

District Officers—Dist. 1, Oakland School, Sherwood G. Bowers; Dist. 2, Manchester Green School, Raymond W. Goslee; Dist. 3, Porter St. School, George H. Wilcox; Dist. 4, South School, J. R. Foster; Dist. 5, Keeney St. School, Edward H. Keeney; Dist. 7, Buckland School, Andrew J. Healy; Dist. 8, Eighth School and Utilities District, Alvin L. Brown.

Supt. of Schools—Alfred F. Howes, office, N School, M.

Schools, Location and Principals.  
 Buckland School—1075 Tolland tpk n Buckland B. Mrs. Marion Pierce.  
 Keeney St. School—321 Keeney, S.M. Mrs. Anna Reideman.  
 South School—S. Main, S.M. Bessie E. Howe.  
 Highland Park School—397 Porter, S.M. Edith Pearson.  
 Manchester Green School—549 Middle tpk E. M.G. Mable A. Lamphear.  
 Oakland School—Deming e McNall, M. Dorothy Armstrong.

In 1945, the Manchester School Board gave Miss Bennet supervisory responsibilities for two more elementary schools: Highland Park and South. Other principals also saw their portfolios doubled. It is unclear what extra work this level of oversight entailed, but a big salary hike did not follow.

In 1951, at the age of 70, Miss Bennet retired. She had shepherded the children of Manchester through the fire, the Spanish flu (schools closed for 10 days at its deadly height), World War I, the Jazz Age, the Depression, World War II, and the start of the Korean War. But televisions were still rare in American homes.

Miss Bennet had known sorrow, of course. Her father, Archibald, died in 1917. Her mother, Frances "Fannie," died in 1919. For many years, she and her sister Sara, four years younger, lived together on Brookfield Street in Manchester. Sara died in 1943 of a heart attack at age 58. After her sister's death, Miss Bennet moved to Benton Street.

In the seventh year of her retirement, Miss Bennet was diagnosed with breast cancer. Despite aggressive treatment, the cancer spread to a lung. She died at Manchester Memorial Hospital on September 1, 1959, at the age of 78. The pastor of the Community Baptist Church officiated at her service at the Watkins-West Funeral Home on East Center Street. She was buried in the Bennet family plot in Wooster Cemetery in Danbury. Her surviving sibling, Robert, died and was interred there in 1967.

- 18 1936—THE PRICE & LEE CO.'S  
 Supt. of Schools—A. H. Alling, office 1146 Main.  
 Schools, Location and Principals.  
 High School—1146 Main. Edson M. Bailey.  
 Barnard School—10 Vine. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
 Franklin School—1151 Main. Chester L. Robinson.  
 Nathan Hale School—160 Spruce. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
 Lincoln School—Main. Ruth S. Crampton.  
 Buncce School—Oleott. Delight Martin.  
 Washington School—94 Cedar. Olive M. Nyman.  
 Buckland School—1075 Tolland tpk. Mrs. Marion Pierce.  
 Keeney St. School—321 Keeney. Mrs. Anna Reideman.  
 South School—S. Main. Ella L. Washburn.  
 Highland Park School—397 Porter. Edith Pearson.  
 Manchester Green School—549 Middle tpk E. MG. Esther M. Granstrom.  
 Robertson School—5 1/2 N. School. Thomas Bentley.  
 Hollister School—57 Hollister. Thomas Bentley.  
 Special Teachers—Helen M. Smith, Charlotte G. Gillette, Henry H. Miller, Bertha Kulberg, Wilfred J. Clarke, Hazel Lutz, Mary Bowen, Hannah Jensen.  
 Nurse—Hannah J. Quinn.

Thelma went to Barnard, now Bennet, in Education Square, for 7th and 8th grade. It was still the South School district, and wasn't consolidated until 1932. The boys and girls were segregated—the boys on the first floor, and the girls on the second floor. That was probably a modern thing. Miss Bennet was the principal and a strong educator—very forceful but very kind—and she made a point of knowing most of her pupils by name. She was also principal of Nathan Hale School, although there was a teaching principal there also, Hulda Butler. At Barnard, there were three different teachers for classes. Margaret Cadman Brown taught Civics. Another teacher was Elizabeth Tynan, who eventually married Ed Bailey (Principal of Manchester High School). Elizabeth Clark, from West Hartford, taught English (it was called Language then) and was Thelma's home room teacher. For math, they had Elizabeth Krapowicz—she lived and boarded with Miss Bennet on Branford Street.



Thelma Carr, a Teacher's Teacher

Outside activities included plays. In 1923, the town had the Centennial Parade and the girls from Barnard dressed in red and white striped skirts and blue blouses with white stars. Pupils went home for lunch at Barnard. There was no physical education at junior high, but the "rec" was there and they had swimming in high school along with physical education.

Thelma graduated from Barnard and went to high school across the road. They offered secretarial, commercial, and college courses. Thelma took the college course for four years. She had Algebra with Pete Wigren, English with Helen Newt, and Latin with Florence Hopkins.

Thelma said she had a nice family life and made many good friends in her neighborhood and in high school. Her class of 1929 was a very close-knit group. They were either the last class to graduate from South Manchester High, or the first class to graduate from Manchester High. After graduation, Thelma wanted to go to college, but it was financially impossible. Although the family never seemed to be deprived, they were not in a position to pay for college expenses. She chose the Willimantic Normal School. She worked one summer at the spinning mill at Cheney Bros. Then, the next year, she worked in the chemistry lab at Cheney Bros. all year and the following summer. Willimantic was a two-year school, and Thelma said they packed more into those two years than they did when they had a three year course for a Bachelor's degree. There were four Normal Schools in Connecticut—Willimantic, New Britain, Danbury and New Haven—and all became Connecticut State Colleges. Willimantic was nearest to Thelma's home. They had one classroom building, and one dorm for upperclassmen. Freshmen lived in houses near the campus. Upper classmen assumed duties in the dorm: Thelma supervised on the floor where she lived and helped in the dining room. They all enjoyed school and made good friends. It was a big contrast to high school. They came home every weekend—sometimes by bus and sometimes with friends.

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Waiting to Teach  
 Thelma graduated from Willimantic Normal School in 1932—the middle of the Depression—when jobs were hard to come by. Mr. Verplanck was Superintendent of schools in Manchester. She applied in Manchester for a job. She had chosen teaching because she always liked school—and she never had a desire not to go to school.

She had a temporary teaching certificate, but no job, so, she stayed home and helped her mother who had a boarder—a teacher—to supplement the family income. Thelma did the ironing for her mother who took in washing. During the second year after graduation, Thelma substituted in Junior High School for Miss Bennet to "keep her hand in" and to get experience, but without pay. She started teaching in Manchester in 1934. Mr. Bentley, principal at Robertson and Hollister Street Schools, interviewed her at home and caught her ironing—he often reminded her of that. Mr. Verplanck, Superintendent, hired her—she was one of the last two teachers he hired in Manchester.

Teaching Times  
 Thelma taught third grade at Robertson for one year. She had 44 children in a self-contained classroom. It was a neighborhood school—all from that area were mostly Polish families. She often wonders what ever happened to those children. She knows one—Arthur Holmes—became a mercician. His family was well known in the North End. Some went on to work for the Cheneys and rode the "Goat" to work every day. Some were farmers, and some worked for Bon Ami.

Teaching Times  
 Thelma started working for \$800 a year, and every year she had some increment even if it was only \$25 or \$50. Eventually, a salary schedule was set up with 13 steps until you reached the maximum. Thelma taught for 36 years in Manchester. She says she doesn't remember any discipline problems. She was a "strict disciplinarian," and the first three days of school were always a nervous period—butterflies every year—but settled down after three days and established a rapport and rules they were expected to abide by.

When Thelma began teaching, she walked to school from Foster Street. When a vacancy came up at Hollister Street School, Mr. Bentley asked Thelma if she would like to go there, and she was happy for the change. It was a neighborhood school with 9 grades—the children lived in the neighborhood and either brought lunch or walked home for lunch. There was no cafeteria.

Hana Jensen taught Home Economics and Henry Miller taught Woodworking (manual arts). Thelma taught second grade and sometimes first grade. There was a school doctor—some were Dr. Knapp, Dr. Holmes, and Dr. Burr. The school nurse, Mary Hilditch Moriarty, examined pupils periodically to check hands, ears, neck and hair. The Dental Hygienist examined teeth once a year for 25¢ a visit. A fund was available through the Educational Club to pay for those who couldn't afford it.

Teachers were required to keep a register, and to keep lesson plans prepared for three days in advance in case it was necessary to have a substitute. Thelma didn't like to take a day off because it was harder to prepare for a substitute than to teach. She always enjoyed teaching. Teachers divided duties in the lunch room and on the playground. After Illing Junior High was built, the 7th and 8th graders went there, and Hollister became K-6th. About that time, the PTA was formed. Thelma found it helpful to know the parents of her pupils—it helped to understand the children.

Changes  
 There were many changes over the years—there were no visual aids. They had an Art Supervisor, Hazel Lutz. She was a wonderful person. She had lesson plans for all six grades. She expected teachers to teach from her lesson plans. Once a month, teachers met with her at Lincoln School where she had her Art room. She would always help you carry out any ideas you might want to use.

The doors to Thelma's room were always open, and she could see people coming and going, and she welcomed them to her room. Mr. Illing came many times, and was a wonderful person to work for. He always came in at the door and talked with the teachers and children. One story Thelma remembers about him is that he stopped by to see her after the classroom had been repainted. Her room had been painted blue. Mr. Illing stopped and asked her if she liked the paint. Thelma said, "It's lovely—it's my favorite color." Mr. Illing said, "I thought you would like it—I chose it." Thelma said it was more than anyone could expect from a superintendent.

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Miss Bennet's will included bequests to family members and friends who had predeceased her. The bulk of her estate, estimated at more than \$100,000, was therefore to go to Manchester's YWCA. But it no longer existed, and the money ended up with the Manchester Unit of the YMCA in Hartford.

In December 1961, the Board of Education voted to rename Bernard Junior High School to honor Miss Bennet. In reporting the news, the *Hartford Courant* described Miss Bennet simply as "another long-time teacher in the town system."

She might have liked that.

## Open Forum

### Her Teachers, Too

To the Editor,

I would like to pay just a small tribute to Miss Elisabeth Bennet. Not only did she do a great deal for the children in Manchester, but for her teachers who loved and respected her as well.

It was she who with her foresight urged teachers who had qualified as teachers in two year normal schools to further their education and earn a college degree. This they did in spite of the fact that many were teaching, keeping a home and raising a family. Several times she audited courses she did not need just to fill the quota required by a college to bring a course to town.

She was always very considerate of her teachers' welfare and health. Never, once, did she call a faculty meeting unless she had something important to discuss. Long ago when few people had cottages at the beach, Miss Bennet always permitted her teachers to use the facilities of her cottage at Cape Cod for long weekends without even being present herself.

Miss Bennet loved flowers and enjoyed sharing them. Several times a week she would bring market baskets filled with posies and distribute them to the teachers to be enjoyed by them and their pupils. At Christmas time holly sent to her by her brother, "Bob," was given to all her teachers.

All who had the privilege of teaching with Miss Bennet will always cherish her memory.

M. F.

## Manchester Children Enjoying Vacation At Coventry Lake.

the announcement. The effect of this announcement is far reaching, far more than the average person realizes.

Some years ago a group of local people recognized the fact that an Open Air School was needed badly in Manchester. Statistics gleaned from the rather meagre school report showed that many children attending the public schools of Manchester were backward in their studies. It was realized at the start that many causes led to this state of affairs and that the utmost judgment would have to be used in an effort to induce parents to send their children to an Open Air school.

### Idea Meets Approval.

Just a small announcement in the Herald to the effect that those interested in forming an educational club would hold a meeting at the High school hall on a certain date. Not an inkling of the true purpose was allowed to leak out through the papers. In fact any-

### Combine Facilities.

It was apparent from the start to those behind the movement that it was a success. The Eighth grade girls who were taught to cook in the little white house just in front of the Open Air school, right beside the Teachers' hall, directed their efforts towards cooking one substantial meal a day for the children. The effects of this step were noticeable immediately. Another thing that the school authorities noticed was the attitude that the parents took towards the idea. An unofficial canvass of the district showed that the movement met with the almost universal approval of the parents.

### Enjoy Coventry Trip.

After the school term ended the public spirited people behind the educational club did not allow their little charges to get back into old ways again. Between forty and fifty of the most aggravated cases were carefully selected and in the summer were treated to a ten days'



Children Who Show Practical Results of Efforts of Educational Club.

thing like publicity was shunned by those behind the movement. But the meeting was held just the same and the policies of the organization outlined. It met with instant approval by those present.

The first steps were to raise money and this was done mostly through private subscriptions. Money was not so easily obtained back in 1913, before the war, as drives and things like that were unheard of. But the work of the club was carried on just the same and many children had hot cocoa and milk. The idea spread. Unfortunately a state law forbids school authorities spending money for any such purpose. In fact it is believed that the same law exists today.

### First Open Air School.

Shortly before the disastrous fire that destroyed the Ninth school building in 1913, a small room was set aside for children who were suffering from malnutrition in an ad-

vacation at the Community Camp in Coventry. This year the camp was under the personal supervision of Miss Elisabeth Bennet, principal of the Nathan Hale school on Spruce street.

Upwards of 120 children were taken care of at the camp. Those who were able to pay did so and those who did not have the wherewithal were made equally welcome. There is no class distinction at the camp, and never will be. Every child is treated the same. Setting up exercises, bathing, games and boating helped to make the trip to Coventry a successful one from every angle.

### Funds Needed to Carry On.

But it takes money to carry on this work. While the educational club will not stand for much publicity, it is thought that it is about time the general public have an insight into the splendid work this organization carries on year after year, sometimes digging down into

Teachers College of Connecticut  
New Britain, Connecticut  
**OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT**

Name Bennet Elizabeth M. Date September 11, 1935  
Last First Middle  
Address 36 Brookfield Manchester Connecticut Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State  
Date of Entrance \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_ Degree B.Ed. June 17, 1937  
Number of Years Attended \_\_\_\_\_ Curriculum Intermediate (4-6)  
Entrance Credentials from \_\_\_\_\_ High School \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

Department and Catalog Number	Descriptive Title	1st Semester		2nd Semester		Final Standing
		Hours	Grade	Hours	Grade	
State Normal School, Danbury, Connecticut - 1907-09						
Arithmetic	40 20	2	1	3	2	77
Art	40 10	2	1	3	2	77
Citizenship	40 10	2	1	3	2	77
Educational Psychology	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
English Language	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Geography	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Handwriting	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
History, U.S.	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Music	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Physical Education	40 14	2	1	3	2	77
Physics	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Reading and Literature	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Science	40 20	3	2	3	2	77
Training (Observation and Practice)	30	Full time		3	2	77
Agriculture	10	2	1	3	2	77
Art of Teaching	20	2	1	3	2	77
Chemistry	10	2	1	3	2	77
Physical Geography	10	2	1	3	2	77
Physiology	10	2	1	3	2	77

Department	Year	Title	Points	Rank
Harvard Boston	Ext. 1935-36	Art and Life	2	A
Conn. State Bd.	1935	Techniques of Guidance in the	2	A
Education Ext.	1935	Contemporary Social and Political	2	A
"	1936	Arithmetic in the Modern School	2	A
Trinity	1936	Individual Psychology	2	A
Yvonne Summer	Session 1937	Modern Tendencies in Ed.	2	A
"	"	Character Education	2	A
"	"	Ethics	1	B
"	"	1938 Foundations of Social	2	A
"	"	History of United States	2	A
"	"	1933 Reading	2	A
"	"	Psychology	2	A
"	"	Improvement of Teaching	2	A
"	"	1935 Advanced Educational Ps	2	A
"	"	Art Appreciation	2	A
"	"	Educational Tests and	2	A
"	"	1934 The Teacher and the New	2	A
"	"	Psychology of Adolescence	2	A

*Elizabeth Mich Bennett - 2 yr. Normal (Danbury Conn.)*

State College Yvonne

Year	Title	Points	Rank
1932	modern tendencies in Ed.	2	A
	Character education	2	A
	Ethics	1	B
1933	Reading	2	A
	Educational Psychology	2	A
	Improvement in Classroom Teaching	2	A
1934	The Teacher and the new Order	2	A
	Adolescent Psychology	2	A
1935	Advanced Educational Psychology	2	A
	Art Appreciation	2	A
	Educational Tests and measurements	2	A

21 points

New York University

Year	Title	Points	Rank
1931-32	Principles of Mental Hygiene	2	A
1932-33	Social Background of the School Child	2	A
1933-34	Philosophy of Education	4	F
1934-35	Theory and Practice of Creative Education	4	F
1935-36	Types of Literature	2	F

14 points

(New ranking system - July 1935 - F - passed only mark used)

Harvard-Boston University Extension

Year	Title	Points	Rank
1934	Art and Life	2	(H)

Honor

*Teachers College of Connecticut  
Bachelor of Education  
(copy) 17th of June - 1937*

## BOLTON

Bolton roads were cleared in good time this morning with the aid of the State Highway department and the town plow. The school bus was barely 15 minutes late.

Past Master Irving Wickham of Manchester Grange will install the officers of Bolton Grange, Friday evening in the basement of the church.

A number of Bolton people hope to be able to attend the W. C. T. U. Institute at Manchester tomorrow at the Y. M. C. A. building on North Main street. The morning session at 10:30 will feature speeches by several Hartford women prominent in the order. Basket lunches will be taken and coffee served. The afternoon session will be resumed at 2 o'clock, at which time addresses will be given by Principal Elizabeth Bennet of the Nathan Hale and Barnard schools, Chief S. G. Gordon and Rev. E. C. Prettyman of New Haven.

18 1941—THE PRICE & LEE CO.'S  
Schools, Location and Principals.

High School—1146 Main. Edson M. Bailey.  
Barnard School—10 Vine. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
Franklin School—1151 Main. Chester L. Robinson.  
Nathan Hale School—160 Spruce. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
Lincoln School—Main. Ruth S. Crampton.  
Bunce School—205 Oleott. Delight Martin.  
Washington School—94 Cedar. Catherine Shea.  
Buckland School—1075 Tolland tpk. Mrs. Marion Pierce.  
Keeney St. School—321 Keeney. Mrs. Anna Reideman.  
South School—8. Main. Ella L. Washburn.  
Highland Park School—397 Porter. Carrie Seymour.  
Manchester Green School—549 Middle tpk. E. M. G.  
Esther M. Granstrom.  
Robertson School—53 N. School. Thomas Bentley.  
Hollister School—57 Hollister. Thomas Bentley.  
Special Teachers—Helen M. Smith, Charlotte G. Gillette, Henry H. Miller, Violet D. McRea, Wilfred J. Clarke, Hazel Lutz, Hannah Jensen, Clarence Gardner, G. Albert Pearson, Phyllis B. Whittaker.  
Nurses—Hannah J. Quinn, Mrs. Cecelia M. Wandt.  
Dental Hygienist—Hazel Gess.

STATE TRADE SCHOOL.  
39 School St.

Director—J. G. Ehmalian.  
Secretary—Doris V. McCollum.  
Teachers—Paul J. Volquardsen, Alexander T. McBride, Harry S. Kitching, William J. Hanna, Howard W. Fisher, William M. Roscoe, George H. Burkhardt, Walter E. Schober, Frank J. Crowley, Robert L. Arendt, Harry L. Gustafson.



SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Board of Education—Charles S. House, Chairman; Carl W. Noren, Secretary; A. Lawrence Riker, George W. Cheney, William F. Ferguson, William E. Buckley, Frederick Rogers, Mrs. Robert H. Smith, Mrs. E. Mae Holden.

Supt. of Schools—A. H. Illing, office, 1146 Main.

Schools, Locations and Principals

- High School—1146 Main. Edson M. Bailey.
- Barnard School—10 Vine. Elizabeth M. Bennet.
- Franklin School—1151 Main. Chester L. Robinson.
- Nathan Hale School—160 Spruce. Elizabeth M. Bennet.
- Lincoln School—Main. Esther Granstrom.
- Bunce School—205 Oleott. Delight Lord.
- Washington School—94 Cedar. Catherine Shea.
- Buckland School—1075 Tolland tpk. Miss Ethel Robb.
- Keeney St. School—321 Keeney. Mrs. Frances Miller.
- South School—8. Main. Mrs. Anna McCann.
- Highland Park School—397 Porter. Carrie Seymour.
- Manchester Green School—549 Middle tpk. E. MG. Esther M. Granstrom.
- Robertson School—53 N. School. Thomas Bentley.
- Hollister School—57 Hollister. Thomas Bentley.
- Special Teachers—Helen M. Smith, Charlotte G. Gillette, Henry H. Miller, Doris Cole, Wilfred J. Clarke, Hazel Lutz, Hannah Jensen, Barbara Dismars, G. Albert Pearson, Martha J. White.
- Nurses—Mrs. Cecilia M. Wandt, Mary Hilditch.
- Dental Hygienist—Hazel Gess.

In the summer of 1931, Elisabeth Bennet began taking graduate-level classes in education. For the next nine summers, she studied. Her courses were for undergraduate and graduate degrees. She was well-prepared for the leadership responsibilities that lay ahead.

HYANNIS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE GRADUATE WORK

Application for Admission

Candidate for the Degree of Master in Education

This application should be returned to the President, Herbert H. Howes, State Teachers College, Hyannis, Massachusetts. Not later than the time when this application is mailed, the applicant should request the offices of the colleges and universities which he has attended to send complete official transcript of his undergraduate record, and graduate records if any, to the President of this College.

1. Full name Miss Elisabeth Montague Bennet  
(please print) (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)
2. Address to which reply should be sent: 36 Brookfield - Manchester - Conn  
Street City State
3. Permanent address 36 Brookfield St. Manchester, Conn.
4. Date of birth: Jan. 22, 1881 Place Thomson, Conn.
5. Proposed major subject for further studies? Ed. H. S. (Social Studies)
6. What has been your major subject in previous study? Elementary Education

Undergraduate Psychology Graduate Education - Social Studies  
to the extent of your previous study:

Name of Institution	Location	Date of Attendance	Degree or Diploma Received	Year
		19	-19	
		19	-19	
		19	-19	

Professional Schools

State Normal	1907-1909	Diploma	1909
Teachers College	19	-1937 (Degree)	1937

Worked as teacher:

Institution	Date	Subjects taught
City Schools	1899-1903	Rural - 1711 subjects (Gr. 1-8) City - Grade 3-4
High School (at Manchester Conn)	1907-1910	Supervisor grades 3, 4-6
High School Building	1910-1912	Grades 1-6
High School	1910-1927	" (1-8) (7-8)
High School	1922-1927	" 1-6 and 105

*Bennet*

MANCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT

Oct. 20 1927

School \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mr. Howes: I hope to be in Dennis for week and. Would it be possible for me to have a short conference with Mr. Risher and Mr. M. Muller on Saturday afternoon evening my mother's visit? If this is not convenient for them can I send my mother of procedure to them in writing?

Kindly send your reply to -  
Miss Elisabeth M. Bennet  
36 Brookfield St.  
Manchester  
Conn.

Sincerely,  
Elisabeth M. Bennet

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION GRADUATE DIVISION

Record of **ELISABETH M BENNET**  
36 BROADFIELD ST  
SOUTH MANCHESTER CONN

Office of the Registrar  
WASHINGTON SQUARE EAST, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Date and Place of Birth: **1-22-1881, DANBURY, CONN** Permanent Address

Degree Held

Specialization (M. A.) Specialization ( )

General Advisor, Prof. General Advisor, Prof.

Special Advisor, Prof. Special Advisor, Prof.

Bulletin, Year Page Bulletin, Year Page

Specific requirements

Specific requirements

Seminars (Ed. D)

Tools (Ed. D)

States **NOT MATRICULATED**

Year	Numbers and Descriptive Titles of Courses Taken	FIRST TERM			SECOND TERM			Course Value
		Sec	Pr	Gr	Sec	Pr	Gr	
1922	ED 135.39 PRINCIPLES OF MENTAL HYGIENE *	30	2	H	-	-	-	1.5
1923	" I 120.57 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL CHILD *	30	2	H	-	-	-	1.5
1924	" I 150.34 PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION *	30	2	P	30	2	P	1.5
1925	ED 145.278 THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CREATIVE EDU *	30	2	P	30	2	P	1.5
1926	" ED 3.4 TYPES OF LITERATURE *	30	2	P	30	2	P	0
1927	" ED 35 SPEECH PROBLEMS AND PRACTICE *	30	2	P	-	-	-	0
1928	" ED 34 INTERPRET READING AND DRIVEN FOR EDU *	-	-	-	30	3	P	1.5
1929	" 265.187 THE EDUCATIONAL TRENDS *	30	3	P	30	3	P	1.5
1929	" 213.74 CONTEMPORARY WORLD PROBLEMS *	30	3	P	30	3	P	1.5

ENTITLED TO HONORABLE DISTINCTION

MANCHESTER, CONN Degree Gr

Not Valid as an Official Transcript Without Seal and Original Signature



Dear Martha: Thank you again for Manchester news. What a long life Mr. and Mrs. Vesper have had together, and such a useful one or ones! I wonder what he will do now, there is our son Philip, I believe, I had both boys and Phil in High School. Both fine in grammar school. At last boys! (I had poured today and had poured Miss Bennett since she left Denmark and fear I have not answered it.

Bernice (Maher) Strant mentions Miss Bennet in a 2006 interview with Susan Barlow --  
[http://www.manchesterhistory.org/reprints/MH55\\_BerniceStrant.html](http://www.manchesterhistory.org/reprints/MH55_BerniceStrant.html)

She says, "at Barnard, I taught eighth-grade boys. The boys and the girls were separated. Many people opposed separating the boys and girls. It was Miss Bennet's idea, and I thought it was logical and correct. She said that boys and girls at that age were better separated. They were just beginning to realize about each other. She said, "What do the wealthy people do with their children? They send them to girls schools and boys schools at this age, and they meet up again afterwards.

"Many years later I became friends with Miss Bennet. She had a lovely cottage at the Cape, right down near the water. I used to go up there, summers. She was very good to me. She was good to everybody. You were scared to death of her. But then you'd find out how good she could be."



HYANNIS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE GRADUATE WORK

Application for Admission *Degree Granted May 1940*

Candidate for the Degree of Master in Education

This application should be returned to the President, Herbert M. Howe, State Teachers College, Hyannis, Massachusetts. Not later than the time when this application is called, the applicant should request the office of the colleges and universities which he has attended to send complete official transcript of his undergraduate record, and graduate records if any, to the President of this College.

1. Full name Ms. Elizabeth Barbara Bennet  
(please print) Miss (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

2. Address to which reply should be sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Direct \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

3. Permanent address 36 Southfield St. Manchester, Mass.

4. Date of birth: Jan 22 '01 Place Manchester, Conn.

5. Proposed major subject for further studies? Social Studies

6. What has been your major subject in previous study? Psychology  
Undergraduate Psychology Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

7. State the extent of your previous study:

Name of Institution	Location	Date of Attendance	Degree or Diploma Received	Year
Colleges				
_____	_____	19__-19__	_____	_____
_____	_____	19__-19__	_____	_____
_____	_____	19__-19__	_____	_____
Graduate and Professional Schools				
<u>Newbury State Normal</u>	_____	<u>1927-1928</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>1928</u>
<u>State Teachers College, New Britain, Conn.</u>	_____	<u>19__-19__</u>	<u>B. Ed.</u>	<u>1937</u>

8. Position held as teacher:

Name of Institution	Date	Subjects taught
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*Elizabeth M. Bennet*  
*Credits toward Ed. M. degree*

*Hyannis S.S.*

*1937. Methods of Educ. Research S. H. S. 4*

*1938. Recog. of the Child in the High School 2*

*" Sch. Org. & Admin. & Supervision 4*

*1939 - European Hist. since the World War 4*

*Cons. of Natural Resources 2*

*New York Union*

*1937-8 - Educ. Trends 6*

*1938-9 - Contemporary High School 2*

*Woods (S.S.)*

*Climatology & Meteorology 2*

*Pres. Near East & Its Historical Background 2*

*Also credits French (4) which is complete*

*Jan 22, 1901*

May 5, 1940

*unopened aliquant*  
1937/40

MISS ELIZABETH M. BENNET  
36 BROOKFIELD STREET  
MANCHESTER, CONN.

Oct 5 '40

Dear Herbert Howe  
Teaching College  
Hyannis, Mass  
My dear Mr. Howe

Will you send me date of Teacher Convention? Mrs. Pauline told me last summer about a reading exhibit she intended to place for convention. I would like to see it if I can arrange to do so.

Thank you for courtesy extended.

Your truly,  
Elizabeth M. Bennet

The following is a statement of the work completed by Miss Elizabeth M. Bennet at the State Teachers College, Hyannis, Massachusetts, during her attendance at summer sessions:

Year	Course	Grade	Sec.	Hrs.
1932	Modern Tendencies in Education	B	2	
	Character Education	A	2	
	Ethics	B	1	
1933	Reading	A-	2	
	Psychology	A	2	
	Improvement of Teaching	A	2	
1934	The Teacher and the "New Social Order"	A	2	
	Psychology of Adolescence	A	2	
1935	Educational Tests & Measurements	A	2	
	Educational Psychology	A	2	
	Art Appreciation	A	2	
1936	History of the U. S. 1492-1789	A	2	
	Foundations of Social Life	A	2	
1937	Principles of Music Education	A	2	
	Methods of Educational Research	A	2	
1938	Reorganization of the Curriculum in Junior & Senior High Schools	A	2	
	School Organization, Administration, and Supervision	A	4	
1939	European History since the World War	A	4	
	Conservation of Natural Resources	A	2	
1940	Present Near East and Its Historical Background	A	2	
	Climatology and Meteorology	A	2	
1941	The Teaching of Handwork in Special Classes	A	2	
1942	Rehabilitation Through Handwork	A	2	
	Methods and Techniques of Teaching Mentally Retarded Children	A	2	

Registrar

Miss Bennet's school transcripts are available to view at [ManchesterHistory.org](http://ManchesterHistory.org)



The fire whistle is located at the Orford Soap Co. Factory, Hilliard.  
 The long blasts indicate the first part of the number.  
 The toots indicate the last part of the number.  
 Emergency call 5432.  
 Each number will be repeated three times.  
 A general alarm will be five long blasts.  
 A recall will be two long blasts.  
 School Signal—Nine long blasts at 7:30 a. m. or 12:30 noon means no school for that session.  
 Military Call—12 long blasts.  
 When you have located a fire make sure whether the apparatus is necessary. Then go to the nearest telephone and they will send in the alarm. Then go to the corner indicated, wait for the firemen and direct them to the fire.

**SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

**Board of Education**—Charles S. House, Chairman; Carl E. Hultine, Secretary; George W. Cheney, William E. Buckley, Janet S. Smith, Sherwood J. Robb, Harold W. Garrity.  
**Supt. of Schools**—A. H. Illing, office, 1146 Main.  
**Schools, Locations and Principals**  
 High School—1146 Main. Edson M. Bailey.  
 Barnard School—10 Vine. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
 Franklin School—1151 M. J. Chester L. Robinson.  
 Nathan Hale School—160 S. Main. Elizabeth M. Bennet.  
 Lincoln School—494 Main. Ethel M. Robb.  
 Washington School—94 Cedar.  
 Buckland School—1075 Tolland tpk. Thomas Bentley.  
 Keeney St. School—321 Keeney. Mrs. Frances Miller.  
 South School—245 S. Main. Mrs. Beulah Johnson.  
 Highland Park School—397 Porter. Carrie Seymour.  
 Manchester Green School—549 Middle tpk. E. M. G. Esther M. Granstrom.  
 Bowers School—135 Princeton. Esther Granstrom.  
 Verplanck School—Oleott. Catherine Shea.  
 Robertson School—53 N. School. Thomas Bentley.  
 Hollister School—57 Hollister. Thomas Bentley.  
 Silver Lane School—33 A. dr. Mrs. Marion Lynch.  
**Special Teachers**—Charlotte G. Gillette, Henry H. Miller, Hazel Lutz, Hannah Jensen, G. Albert Pearson, Martha J. White, Robert Johns, Ida P. Mindel, Harry S. Novack, Neil A. Lawrence, Julia A. Lynch, Genevieve Scannell, Warren Wood.  
**Nurses**—Mrs. Cecilia M. Wandt, Mrs. Mae Morton, Mrs. Anna Clay.  
**Dental Hygienists**—Hazel Hooley, Carol Ann Wall.

**HOWELL CHENEY TECHNICAL SCHOOL**  
 39 School Street

**Director**—Harry Folgmann.  
**Secretary**—Doris M. Sinnamon.  
**Office Secretary**—Marion Warren.

1945-04-24-Rearrangement of school system positions due to Ruth Crampton quit. Note new responsibilities for Elisabeth Bennet long an uncertainty in our records. Blue arrow.

**School Principal Quits; Board Makes Changes**

**Resignation of Miss Ruth S. Crampton Results in Various Teacher Assignments.**

Miss Ruth S. Crampton, for about 35 years connected with the local schools, most of that time as principal of the Lincoln school and since 1932, supervisor of the outlying schools, with the exception of the Hollister and Robertson schools, last night resigned her position to become effective at the close of the present year.  
 Her resignation, which has been before the school board since March, gives the board an opportunity to arrange for several changes that will be made in the supervision of schools at the opening next fall. These changes were made by the board at its meeting last night.

**Head of Lincoln School**  
 Miss Crampton came to Manchester at a time when an increase in the number of pupils attending schools in the Ninth district was noted. At that time all of the schools in the district were located on School street with the exception of the High school which was across the street. With the need for more room apparent, the first half of the present Lincoln school was built and Miss Crampton taught in the new school and was principal. After the school fire in 1913 the Lincoln school was doubled in size and Miss Crampton remained as principal. With the consolidation of schools in 1932 she was given additional duties and in addition to being the principal of the Lincoln school, she was named supervisor of the Washington, Manchester Green, Buckland, Highland Park, Keeney, South Main, Bunce and Silver Lane schools.

**Changes Made**

The resignation of Miss Crampton resulted in several changes being made by the Board last night.

Miss Elisabeth Bennet, who has been principal of the Barnard school and supervisor of the Nathan Hale school, is given additional duties. She is well qualified for the additional work as she has long held a supervisory position and has long been connected with the local system. It was Miss Bennet, then supervisor of the grade schools in the Ninth district, who turned in the alarm for the school fire on that Thursday afternoon on October 23, 1913, when nearly 1,100 children marched out to safety. Miss Bennet is now to become supervisor of the Barnard, Nathan Hale, Highland Park and South Main street schools.

**Also Additional Duties**

Thomas Bentley who has been principal of the Hollister street

**street schools.**

**Also Additional Duties**  
 Thomas Bentley who has been principal of the Hollister street school and who had supervised the Robertson school on North Main street, will be given in addition the Buckland school of which Miss Ethel Robb is the principal.

Miss Catherine C. Shea, who has been principal of the Washington school, is to remain as principal of that school but in addition is to be the supervisor of the Bunce, Silver Lane Homes and Keeney street schools. Miss Shea is now in charge of one of the fastest growing territories in town and it is estimated that the enrollment in the Washington school for next year will show an increase of about 40 pupils.

**Gets Another School**

Miss Esther M. Granstrom, now principal of the Manchester Green school where she teaches the eighth grade, is to become the principal of both the Green and Lincoln schools.

As the result of naming of Miss Shea to her new work she will give up teaching the sixth grade in the Washington school and in her place a new teacher will be engaged.

The same will be true of Miss Granstrom which means that a new eighth grade teacher will have to be engaged for the Manchester Green school.

Miss Madeline C. Brown, who has taught grade three in the Nathan Hale school in the morning and has been an assistant to Miss Crampton, at the Lincoln school in the afternoon, is now made administrative assistant at the Lincoln school.

**Other Changes Made.**

Miss Huldah A. Butler, who has been assistant principal at the Nathan Hale and has taught grade three at that school, in the afternoon, is to be administrative principal at the Nathan Hale school. The advancement of these two will mean that they will not return as teachers and an additional new teacher will have to be secured to take their places.

The principals in all of the other schools in town will remain as they are now.

In addition to the new teachers engaged to fill the places made necessary by the changes approved last night it was also voted to increase the teaching staff at the Washington school from 11 to 12 teachers and an increase from 11 to 13 teachers in the Lincoln school was also voted. This means six new teachers to be engaged.

**Increase in Classes**

Additional teachers are needed as there is going to be an increase of about 50 pupils in the Washington school next year. Such an increase in the first and second grades means that a new room must be opened for the second grade pupils. It will also be necessary to hold double sessions in this school next year.

The additional increase in the Lincoln school is expected from the Lenox street development and will be reflected mostly in the third grade.

New clerks will also be needed. Mr. Bentley to get one of these. The Board also voted last night

to engage an additional teacher for the High school.

There are now 80 more pupils attending the elementary schools than was the case a year ago. In the High school there are now 1,381 enrolled.

**Adds To Costs**

The new teachers to be engaged for next year will add to the cost of the teachers' salary and with the usual increase granted to teachers for the coming year, it will mean an increase in teachers' salaries of about \$25,000 and with other expenditures such as increases to janitors, heat and other details will bring the cost to about \$525,000 for schools in Manchester next year. Last year the cost was \$493,500.

Manchester Herald, 1936

**REPORT TOMORROW ON REPEAL EFFECT**

**Police Chief Gordon, Principal Bennet and Rev. Prettyman to Speak.**

The Manchester branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union will hold an institute tomorrow in the Y. M. C. A. starting at 10:30 a. m. Mrs. Rossa Brookings will preside. The devotions will be led by Rev. Dr. F. E. Reynolds of the Second Congregational church.

Announcements for the state will be made by Mrs. Louis St. Clair Burr of Manchester, president of the state organization. Other speakers will be Mrs. Mary Wells, former state president; Mrs. Henrietta Kaufmann and Mrs. Norma Burgess all of Hartford.

A survey of the effects of the repeal will be reported by members of the local branch. Miss Ella Stanley will offer prayer. Basket lunches will be served at noon with coffee.

At 2 o'clock the worship service will be in charge of Dr. Earl Story of the South Methodist church. Chief Samuel G. Gordon will speak on "What Repeal Has Meant to Manchester." Principal Elizabeth Bennet will speak on the subject of "What Education Can Do," and Rev. E. C. Prettyman of New Haven will use in his topic, "What Repeal Has Meant to Connecticut."

An invitation has been extended to churches in this and the surrounding towns to attend the institute.



PAGE TEN Herald October 23, 1963  
**Some Still Remember School Fire 50 Years Ago**  
 (Continued from Page One)



Smoke and flames shoot from the windows at the front of the school.

**Some Still Remember** Herald October 23, 1963  
**School Fire 50 Years Ago**

By WILLIAM COE

At Bennet Junior High School down on Educational Square, life today went on as usual, and the day's small troubles and triumphs will soon pass unnoticed into oblivion.

No doubt, few Bennet pupils or teachers in glancing at the calendar were aware that this date, Oct. 23, 1963, marks the anniversary of the most momentous event in the school's long history.

It was just 50 years ago today, on Thursday, Oct. 23, 1913, that the building known as the Ninth District "East" School, which stood on the site now occupied by the Barnard and Franklin buildings of the Elisabeth M. Bennet School, exploded in flames shortly after 2 o'clock of the afternoon session.

An hour and a half later, the huge wooden structure was a smouldering pile of ashes and had carried with it to destruction the public library and a dwelling on Wells St.; and the Rogers business block, the South Manchester Fire Department's Hose House 4, and three other private homes on School St.

Fanned by a brisk wind from the south, the

fire had turned into a conflagration, and then into a holocaust which threatened the entire business district along Main St. before it was finally brought under control shortly before nightfall.

When the fire losses were totaled, they reached the then staggering sum of \$1,000,000—a figure which would undoubtedly be multiplied five or six times were the fire today.

Even now 50 years later, the terrible memory of that day remain clear in the minds of many; and firemen and Manchester residents still refer to the Great School Fire of 1913 as the most devastating and spectacular in the town's history.

Miss Elisabeth M. Bennett, school principal, and Fred A. Verplanck, superintendent of the district—both of whom played key roles in the story—are dead now, as are many other persons and forgotten figures. But the story lived, intact, despite the loss of the records when its own building burned.

(See Page Ten)

Southern pine, darkened by yearly spots of shellac. Potentially dynamite. Verplanck prayed that his unyielding discipline would work. He could bring into the school on the doors, onto the lawn, scaling the fence along Wells St. "Go straight home. Don't look back," their teachers cried, and the children fled—sweaters and coats forgotten behind—into the chill wind.

Less than three minutes had now elapsed from the sounding of the alarm when janitor William Gleason came through the double front doors, followed by Miss Bennet, the last to leave the building.

Terrified mothers, pouring toward the school from every direction, some screaming, others weeping; or weeping tears of relief as they wept for their children.

Five minutes from the alarm. The smoke from the blacker, higher, billowed strangely puffy. With the smashing glass above, flames licked from broken third story windows.

Now hose companies one and four were on the scene cutting in to hydrants. Number one under L. N. Heebner raced to the front steps and through the double doors, to be blasted by the fire-storm rolling in. It was hopeless. The school as good as gone.

Janitor Gleason, Verplanck stepped before the high school, pulled LaMotte Russell, by- ally allayed his fears. "Worry about," Russell

Janitor Gleason, Verplanck stepped before the high school, pulled LaMotte Russell, by- ally allayed his fears. "Worry about," Russell

Janitor Gleason, Verplanck stepped before the high school, pulled LaMotte Russell, by- ally allayed his fears. "Worry about," Russell

Teacher and Bennet Middle School principal Marsha Gunther (1940-2015) recalled Miss Bennet as a supervising educator with high standards for teachers, staff, and students. Marsha said that, although Miss Bennet could be intimidating, she cared deeply for the whole school community.



Manch EveningHerald 3/20/1978

# Reflections

Hal Turkington  
Managing Editor

Two Manchester schools now carry the names of two master teachers who gave long years of service to them.

On Dec. 13, 1961, the Board of Education named the Barnard Junior High School the Elisabeth M. Bennet Junior High School.

That same night the board named the Hollister Street School the Thomas Bentley School.

Miss Bennet retired in June 1951; she was deceased when the school was named in her memory.

Tom Bentley retired in June 1960 and was still alive when the school was dedicated in his memory. He died April 26, 1971.

\*\*\*

Today let's talk about Barnard — ooops, I mean Bennet — Junior High School, and Miss Elisabeth M. Bennet. Note the "s" in her name; that's correct.

We can relate to Miss Bennet and the old Barnard School that fronts on Vine Street in old Educational Square near lower Main Street.

When she retired in 1951, Miss Bennet was the supervising principal of Barnard, Nathan Hale, Highland Park and South schools. She came to Manchester from Danbury in 1909 as principal of Barnard; Barnard, of course, was originally named after Henry Barnard, the famous American educator.

Miss Bennet loved libraries, and when she retired they named the Barnard library in her honor. That was on Feb. 7, 1952.

She called libraries "the heart of the school" and said so in a Letter to the Editor after the dedication of that library. She organized the town's first junior high libraries.

\*\*\*

Miss Bennet had many firsts to her credit in education. She was the first to promote a manual training program, and she was credited with promoting the first recreation center.

She was the first to use visual aids by means of movie projectors, and

she stimulated interest in art and pottery.

\*\*\*

No one writes about Miss Bennet without a strong reference to the Oct. 23, 1913 fire that destroyed the old Ninth District School on that same square that today houses the Barnard and Franklin Buildings, the East Side Rec, and the newest member of that family on Educational Square — the auditorium and library.

Manchester had been a pioneer in the practice of school fire drills; it was a saving factor during the fire.

This correspondent researched that fire for a feature on its 40th anniversary — Oct. 23, 1953. We reprinted much of the paper of Oct. 23, 1913.

We sat for hours with Miss Bennet at her 64 Benton St. home drawing upon her reflections of that fire.

She had early that morning reprimanded a boy for using a pea shooter in class. It was he who discovered the fire and ran back to tell Miss Bennet.

She immediately rang the alarm and within three minutes every child was safely out of the building. And within 10 minutes that old frame Ninth District School was consumed by flames.

That pea shooter boy, we learned, was Sam Smith, one whom we knew very well. Sam was around and we got his story about the fire, too. Sam is now deceased.

There were 1,000 pupils and teachers in that building. The flames shot so high they were seen all over town; fire equipment from as far away as Hartford came to assist.

\*\*\*

Miss Bennet was a real task master; she taught you to study; you learned; she had a tremendous influence on her students.

Ask them; you bump into them most every day in the week in Manchester.

We closed this column with those words expressed in the Oct. 23, 1913 Herald:

"...AND THREE CHEERS FOR MISS BENNET."

*Dick Jenkins's recollections about Miss Bennet and Barnard School, 1949-1951*

Miss Bennet was an extraordinary educator. During my Barnard years, Miss Bennet had firm control of Barnard and Nathan Hale schools, while still making time to assist children and families in need. For parents working at the mills, she would keep students at school until the parents' shifts were over, and in an emergency, she would drive students home in her own car, a green Hudson sedan — just two examples of her caring and compassion for the children. Miss Bennet noted that prestigious private schools separated boys and girls, and instituted that technique at Barnard. She established the first school library at Barnard in 1927, beginning with books from her private collection. Another unusual program during Miss Bennet's principalship was the staging of *The Mikado*, the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, in 1950 — an ambitious project for us youngsters, and a wonderful memory for the entire seventh grade. I still remember the lyrics to the songs. Miss Bennet may have instituted Special Education teaching at Barnard for developmentally disabled students. I recall that some of those students were driving to school themselves, which suggests they were four years behind the normal chronological progression of grades. Miss Bennet devoted her entire working life to education. In my time she wasn't teaching classes, she was a supervisor of several schools — a supervisor was above a principal. Miss Bennet can take much of the credit for saving the lives of students and faculty on that terrible day in October 1913 when the wooden Ninth District school burned to ashes. I believe Fred Verplanck established the fire drills, but he was out of town on the day of the 1913 fire. Frequent statements appeared in the newspapers saying the complete complex was a potential tinderbox. Miss Bennet scheduled systematic fire drills at the campus. The staff knew to wait until the fire alarm was sounded, and then follow the specific procedure for students to exit their classrooms in single file, one classroom after another, until the campus was cleared. Anna Grimason, along with other students, said that on the day of the fire, they were unaware a fire had developed within the school. They followed the procedure as if it were just another fire drill, and all made it to safety, in what could have been as tragic an event as the 1944 Hartford Circus Fire.



# FOCUS / Leisure

## Fire!

Manch Evening Herald - Nov. 9, 1983

### School emptied in 58 seconds; destroyed in minutes

By Susan Plese  
Herald Reporter

Oct. 23, 1913 The day dawned clear and beautiful. One of those glorious fall mornings that make children want to play hooky.

Bertha Wetherell of Hartford Road was a fifth grade student at the Ninth District School on the corner of School and Main streets. "It was a beautiful day, I remember. I didn't want to go to school," she says. Mother's rules prevailed, however, and young Bertha made off with her sister for the three-story building just a few blocks from her home on Rogers Place, just off Prospect Street. It was to be her last day at the school.

At about 2:15 that afternoon, a fire started in the school. Within five minutes the old pine building was engulfed in flames. Miraculously, the students — who numbered between 900 and 1,000 — and their teachers escaped. There was no injury and no loss of life.



Bertha Wetherell

NO ONE THING seemed to know how the fire started. News reports, including a report from the Oct. 24 Manchester Half-Weekly Herald, said it originated in a wastebasket in the library.

By one account, a boy named Jim reported the incident to his teacher, Clair Lawler. By another account, a boy of 10 named Francis Smith ran to the office of the head teacher, Elizabeth M. Bennett.

Mrs. Wetherell, however, says she remembers the fire started in the cooking room. "Miss Pearson, our cooking teacher, tried to put it out and got scorched on her hair and face," she says.

But according to the Manchester Herald, it was Miss Bennett who was the real heroine of the story. Seeing that the fire had spread from the wastebasket to a wooden desk above, she smashed the glass over the general alarm box, cutting her hand in the process. The alarm at once sounded the fire drill signal in the building and summoned the district fire department.



This artist's drawing of the old Ninth District School was printed in the Manchester Half-Weekly Herald the day after the building was destroyed by fire. Damage to the school and the block of burned buildings totaled about \$200,000.

THE SCHOOL EMPTIED of students in 58 seconds. "The tramp, tramp, tramp of their little feet was as regular as in the ordinary fire drill," said the Herald reporter.

But Mrs. Wetherell says there was some confusion, and the exit, though hasty, wasn't entirely orderly. In fact, before leaving the school, she broke away from her classmates to re-enter her classroom.

"I had bought myself a new coat," she says. "It was navy blue with a red and light blue stripe on the collar. I didn't want to lose that," she says.

During fire drills, children were instructed to leave the building without looking back, or to the right or left, Mrs. Wetherell says.

"But I'm nosy," she says. "I turned around and looked. It looked funny on the third floor. I thought I smelled smoke, so I went back in and got my coat and somebody else's, and my sister was across the hall and I got hers."

THE COAT COULD have cost Mrs. Wetherell her life. The school was made entirely of wood, sheathed inside with yellow pine finished in shellac. "Gunpowder could hardly have been more inflammable," said the Herald. "Five minutes after the alarm sounded, no person could have existed alive on the second floor."

How did Mrs. Wetherell escape the notice of her teacher?

"When the kids realized it was a fire they kind of scattered around. It gave me a chance to sneak back to get my new coat," she says.

Leaving the classroom for the second time, Mrs. Wetherell looked up the stairwell. "It was this big wide stairwell, as wide as this room," she says, gesturing to her kitchen. "I saw these big flames coming out. It was terrible. I got out of there fast."

Mrs. Wetherell doesn't remember anyone taking attendance to make sure all of the children were safe. "But they said right away everyone was out," she says. She remembers some teachers had to break down a fence in the school yard to let the kindergarten children out. Shortly after the fire started, the children were led to Teacher's Hall across the street, and from there they were sent home.

HEARING THE ALARM and seeing great clouds of black smoke from the vicinity of the school caused terror in many a mother's heart, the Herald reported. "From all over the district mothers ran shrieking toward the building. Some fell in hysterics and others wept with joy as they embraced their children."

Mrs. Wetherell found her father just outside the Cheney Mills, where he worked. "I met my father

coming out of the dye house with his apron on and wooden shoes," she says. Other employees were hanging out of the windows, trying to find out what happened.

"I got up on Prospect Street and I met my mother coming down," she continues. "She had heard about it. I don't know how."

The building was a total loss. Before the fire was contained, it also consumed the public library on Wells Street, the Hose House of Number 4, School Street, the Rogers building, School Street, the William McCormick dwelling, School Street, the Benson Boarding House, School Street, the Campbell house on School Street and the Alexander Trotter house on School and Vine streets. Four other buildings, including the Watkins Building on Main and School streets, were damaged. Loss was estimated at \$165,000 to \$200,000.

MRS. WETHERELL WENT to school double session after that. She attended the high school from 1 to 8 p.m. daily. Her sister went to South School.

Did she suffer any nightmares after the fire? No. "But I've always been afraid of fire since," she says. "You never saw anything go up so fast, just like a bomb exploded."



Photo shows the Ninth District School engulfed in flames. Luckily, students

were well-prepared and emptied the building in 58 seconds.



This old photo loaned by the Manchester Historical Society shows the school

after the fire. Little remained to be salvaged.



Elisabeth and her sister Sara lived at 36 Brookfield St. After Sara's death, Elisabeth moved to 64 Benton St., Manchester.

Elisabeth and Sara remained single and lived together in Manchester, during the years of Elisabeth's brilliant career as an educator. Sara died in 1943.

Manchester Evening Herald August 9, 1943  
Sara passed 8/8/1943

# Obituary

## Deaths

**Miss Sara R. Bennet**  
Miss Sara Reba Bennet died at her home, 36 Brookfield street Sunday morning. She leaves one sister, Miss Elizabeth M. Bennet of Manchester, and one brother, Robert N. Bennet of Atlantic Highlands, N. J.  
Funeral services will be held in the chapel at Wooster cemetery, Danbury, Conn., tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock.

Manchester Evening Herald June 20, 1951

## Miss Bennet Retires As School Principal

### Completes 50 Years of Service; Presence of Mind Saved Hundreds At 1913 School Fire

Miss Elisabeth M. Bennet is retiring from her position as supervising principal of the Barnard Nathan Hale, Highland Park and South Schools, effective today with the closing of the schools for the summer holiday, after having completed over 50 years of service with the Manchester School system.

Miss Bennet is remembered with affection by thousands of Manchester residents whom she has had under her tutelage since she started her connection with the local education department in 1909. She started her teaching career in Danbury, and when she came to Manchester she came as principal of the Barnard school, a position which she has held since that time. When the Nathan Hale school was opened she also took over the supervision of that building. She now has charge of Highland Park, and South schools as well.

#### Organized Library

Miss Bennet has been instrumental in the forming of libraries for the town Junior High grades. In 1927 she organized the first such library in the basement of the Barnard school. This was done through her own effort by soliciting volumes from her friends, by donations from her own library, and through the generous donation of her summer vacation time to the cataloguing of the new project. Her many friends and pupils have set about a plan to dedicate a new section of the Barnard school library to Miss Bennet and to name that library for her.

Fred A. Verplanck, superintendent of schools in Manchester for many years, under whom Miss Bennet worked for a long period of time, in commenting today upon her resignation, spoke of the

outstanding work that she has done in Manchester.

#### Saved Hundreds of Lives

One of the most outstanding pieces of work that she did for the town of Manchester in the opinion of Mr. Verplanck occurred on October 23, 1913 at the time of the schoolhouse fire. A boy reported to Miss Bennet that there was a fire in the library of the school and without any delay or hesitation she immediately rang the alarm and within three minutes every child was out of the school building. Within ten minutes every room in the building was a mass of flames.

Since coming here in 1909 Miss Bennet has been devoted to her work, which has come first in all she did. She first came as a training teacher to train other teachers and she has done considerable work along these lines all these years. Her work with problem boys and girls has also been outstanding, according to Mr. Verplanck.

#### Successor Appointed

The Board of Education, which has accepted Miss Bennet's resignation, has appointed as her successor Richard Byers, who is now completing his work towards a doctorate in the field of education at the University of Connecticut. Mr. Byers was recommended to the Board by Superintendent of Schools Arthur H. Hling, who told the Board that he has been searching for a man to replace Miss Bennet, and that he felt that he had finally found a man who has the qualifications necessary to meet the rapid change which is foreseen for that position.

Mr. Byers was graduated from Lyndon Normal School in Vermont in 1940 with a certificate in elementary education, from Boston University in 1943 with a BA in secondary education, and from Boston University in 1946 with his MA. He has taught a large variety of grades, and his past experience has given the Board of Education confidence in his ability to meet future development in the local school system.





**Elizabeth Bennet, Former Principal, Dies At Age 78**

Special  
The Hartford Courant (1923-); Sep 2, 1959; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Hartford Courant  
pg. 6D

# Elizabeth Bennet, Former Principal, Dies At Age 78

MANCHESTER (Special) — School administration officials, former students and friends Tuesday mourned the passing of Miss Elizabeth M. Bennet, 78, retired school principal, who had served 42 years in the local public school system.

Miss Bennet died early Tuesday at the Manchester Memorial Hospital after a long illness.

Superintendent of Schools Arthur H. Illing, when notified of her death, paid tribute to "the breadth of her vision, her personal interest in the welfare of her pupils and her tireless devotion to the field of education."

Miss Bennet started her long career in Manchester schools as supervisor and principal of the North District School, where she served from 1909 to 1917. She was named principal of Barnard School in that year and added to her principal's duties the supervision of Nathan Hale, Highland Park and South Schools in 1945.

Attended Vassar

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

She leaves a brother, Robert N. Bennet, of Norwalk.

Funeral services will be held Thursday at 1 p.m. at the Watkins-West Funeral Home, 142 East Center St. The Rev. John R. Neibert, pastor of the Community Baptist Church will officiate. Burial will be in Wooster Cemetery, Danbury.

Friends may call at the funeral home Wednesday from 3 to 5 and 7 to 9 p.m.

Name	Archibald Bennett		
Lot	30	Sect.	D
Permit No.	6470		
Date	Aug 6-1917		
Place of birth	Scotland	Place of death	3 Terrace Pl
Age yrs.	74	mos.	4
Days	27		
Grave No.			
Cause of death	Apoplexy		
Parents' name			
Undertaker	Gauger		
Owner of lot	Bennet, Robert N. et al		
Order	Written	Verbal	
Removed	Oct 17-19		
By	to		

Name	Child of Archibald & Fanny Bennett		
Lot No.	50	Sect.	B
Permit No.	1048		
Date	July 3, 1890		
Place of birth	Danbury	Place of death	1 Terrace Pl
Age yrs.		mos.	
Days	10		
Grave No.			
Cause of death	Premature birth		
Parents' name			
Undertaker			
Owner of lot			
Order	Written	Verbal	
Removed	Oct 17-1919		
By	to		

Name	Bennet Robert N.		No.	146545
Lot	E 1/2 2	Sec.	6	Lot Owner
Sara R & Robert N. Bennet				
Late Residence	26 Assise Way, Norwalk, Conn.			
Place of Birth	Danbury, Conn.	Place of Death	26 Assisi Way, Norwalk, Conn.	
Age: yrs.	84	mos.	days	birth
				June 11, 1883
Cause of Death	Probable acute Myocardial infarction		Date	July 8, 1967
Parent's Name				
Single	<input type="checkbox"/>	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Date of Burial	July 11, 1967
Undertaker	Magner Funeral Home, Inc.			
Removed	to			
By	to			

Name	Bennet, Sara Raba		
Lot	2	Sect.	6
Permit No.	11820		
Date	Aug 7, 1942		
Place of birth	Danbury, CT	Place of death	Manchester, Conn
Age yrs.	57	mos.	6
Days	30		
Cause of death	acute myocarditis		
Parents' name	Archibald & Fanny Bennett		
Undertaker	Watkins-West		
Owner of lot	Sara R. Bennet		
Removed	to		
By	to		

Name	Bennet, Elizabeth M.		No.	144576
Lot	E 1/2 2	Sec.	6	Lot Owner
Bennet				
Late Residence	64 Benton St., Manchester, Conn.			
Place of Birth	Danbury	Place of Death	Manchester	
Age: yrs.	78	mos.	days	birth
				Jan. 22, 1881
Cause of Death	Carcinoma of breast		Date	Sept. 1, 1959
Parent's Name	Archibald & Fanny (Lewis) Bennet			
Single	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>			Date of Burial	Sept. 3, 1959
Undertaker	Watkins-West, Manchester			
Removed	to			
By	to			



## YWCA Big Beneficiary In Miss Bennet Will

The Manchester unit of the Hartford County Young Women's Christian Assn., which filed articles of association in the town clerk's office yesterday, is to be one of the principal beneficiaries under the terms of the will of the late Miss Elisabeth M. Bennet.

Probate Judge John J. Wallett said Miss Bennet's estate has not yet been inventoried but that it will probably run between \$100,000 and \$120,000. It is not yet known exactly just how much the YWCA will receive but it will probably be a "sizeable amount," the judge said.

Under the terms of the will, Mrs. Helen Dykeman of Bridgeport, Miss Bennet's second cousin, will receive \$5,000 and another second cousin, Mrs. Violet Boyd of New Haven, will receive \$10,000.

### Stocks in Trust Fund

All corporate stocks owned by Miss Bennet at the time of her death are to be held by the Manchester Trust Co., now the Connecticut Bank and Trust Co., in trust, with the income going to her brother, Robert N. Bennet of Norwalk. After his death, the income would go to Elizabeth A. Krapowicz, Miss Bennet's friend, and in the event of her death, to another friend, Hazel Hooley, also of Manchester.

Miss Bennett lived with Miss Krapowicz, a retired eighth grade teacher, for many years. Miss

Hooley is the elementary school dental hygienist.

After the deaths of these persons the income would then go to the YWCA to defray its annual expenses. All the rest and residue of Miss Bennet's estate will, when it is settled, go to the local YWCA's building fund.

Miss Bennett who died Sept. 1 at the age of 78, retired in 1951 after serving as supervising principal of the Barnard, Nathan Hale, Highland Park and South Schools. She came to Manchester in 1909 as a teacher.

### Protect Volunteers

A spokesman for the YWCA said the action taken by the organization in filing the articles of association was done with the idea of protecting the volunteer workers who serve in the group.

She explained that, previously, the volunteers were liable to court action as individuals in the event a suit was ever brought as the result of an accident. Now, the unit rather than the individual would be liable to any court action.

Taking this legal step has been contemplated for sometime, she said. The action does tie in with the bequest somewhat, she said, but was not the primary reason it was taken.

Signers of the articles of association are Celeste H. Sheldon, Sally L. Treash, Martha E. Reichenbach, Etta M. Miner and Elizabeth W. Hurd.

*We are grateful to  
Dick Jenkins, the Manchester Historical Society, Town Historian Susan Barlow,  
and Noreen Cullen for much of the historical content.*

## Miss Elisabeth Bennet – *An Appreciation*

By Claudia D. Kuehl, member of The Sculpture Project Committee

For 62 years, the school campus at the southern end of Main Street in Manchester has been called Bennet. First came Bennet Junior High School, in 1961. In 1992, the school became Bennet Middle School. Now it's Bennet Academy.

The Bennet referenced, of course, is Miss Elisabeth Montague Bennet, who in 1913 became principal of the precursor to Bennet and who continued to serve until 1951, when she retired at the age of 70.

She must have been a great and beloved principal, and Bennet serves as her monument in bricks. But other schools in Manchester are named after excellent educators, too. Why does Miss Bennet, alone among them, rate a statue in bronze?

In researching her life for the Manchester Sculpture Committee, I learned why. Her energy, discipline, creativity, generosity, and commitment to children and the community made her a larger-than-life presence among them. She championed school libraries, the arts, educational films, and recreational and social activities, and she performed kindnesses large and small. Her elevation to legendary status began early, after a horrific fire raced through the school – in 1913, in her second month as principal – and all survived. Did Miss Bennet really wear a hat ever afterwards because her hair burned off in the fire? Did she really race back into the inferno to save more children? I know this: Miss Bennet doesn't need unverifiable tales of sacrifice and derring-do to merit her statue. Her documented actions during the fire, and her contributions over the rest of her rich, productive career, are plenty.

I attended Bennet Junior High School for grades 7-9. I don't recall ever learning about Miss Bennet, and I never heard about the fire until my time on the committee. What I do remember is the school song, which we learned early and sang often at assemblies. Here are the first three stanzas:

*She stands; strong and steadfast,  
With highest aims for right  
Shedding abroad her knowledge.  
We hail the Blue and White!*

*To those who attend her  
Be loyal, and do  
Your best in ev'rything you can,  
With standards high and true.*

*Our utmost devotion  
And thanks now are due,  
For laughs and loves and learning,  
O Bennet, to you.*

Those lyrics, I now see, describe Miss Bennet as well as the school her principles built: Strong and steadfast. Loyal. Aiming for right. Spreading knowledge. Holding high standards. Understanding that for learning to take root, laughter and love must be present.

For the biographical essay about Miss Bennet, I consulted material maintained by the Manchester Historical Society, including essential research conducted by Susan Barlow, Dick Jenkins, and Noreen Palladino Cullen. I also relied on research carried out by Sculpture Committee members and the sculptor, Michael Keropian. I thank former Manchester Town Clerk Joseph Camposeo for assistance accessing the town's annual reports from 1909 through 1963. Any errors are mine.

Here is the last stanza of the Bennet Junior High School song:

*God bless our Alma Mater!  
And may we always try  
To keep her light forever burning  
BENNET JUNIOR HIGH*

Miss Bennet, thank you. May your well-deserved statue ensure that your light shines far into the future, inspiring generations to come. God bless you.

### The Sculpture Project Committee:

Lynn Sottile

Tana Parseliti

Susan Barlow

Joyce Hodgson Post

Michele O'Neil

Catherine E. Wynn

Susan C. Wright

Claudia Kuehl

Ann Lucente

Donna Fitzgerald

Edward Burzawa

Catherine Thrall

Dorothy Malerba

*Our fiduciary partner*

Manchester Historical Society

175 Pine Street

Manchester, CT 06040

501(c)(3)







Portrait by Carolyn Emerson

*“Miss Bennet’s association with the schools of Manchester was long and outstanding. The breadth of her vision, her personal interest in pupils and teachers, and her tireless devotion to their welfare have established her place in the records of Manchester schools as a principal of unsurpassed excellence. Those of us who worked with Miss Bennet shall always value our association with her as colleagues and friends. We are deeply saddened by her passing.”*

Arthur Illing

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Manchester for the tent and chairs  
for the Ceremony  
Bennet Academy  
for their enthusiasm for the statue of  
Elisabeth M. Bennet  
All who supported our Fundraisers  
and Silent Auctions*

The Sculpture Project is grateful to:

**The Manchester Historical Society** for their fiduciary support.

**Town of Manchester Board of Directors** and  
**Steve Stephanou**, General Manager, for their support of this project.

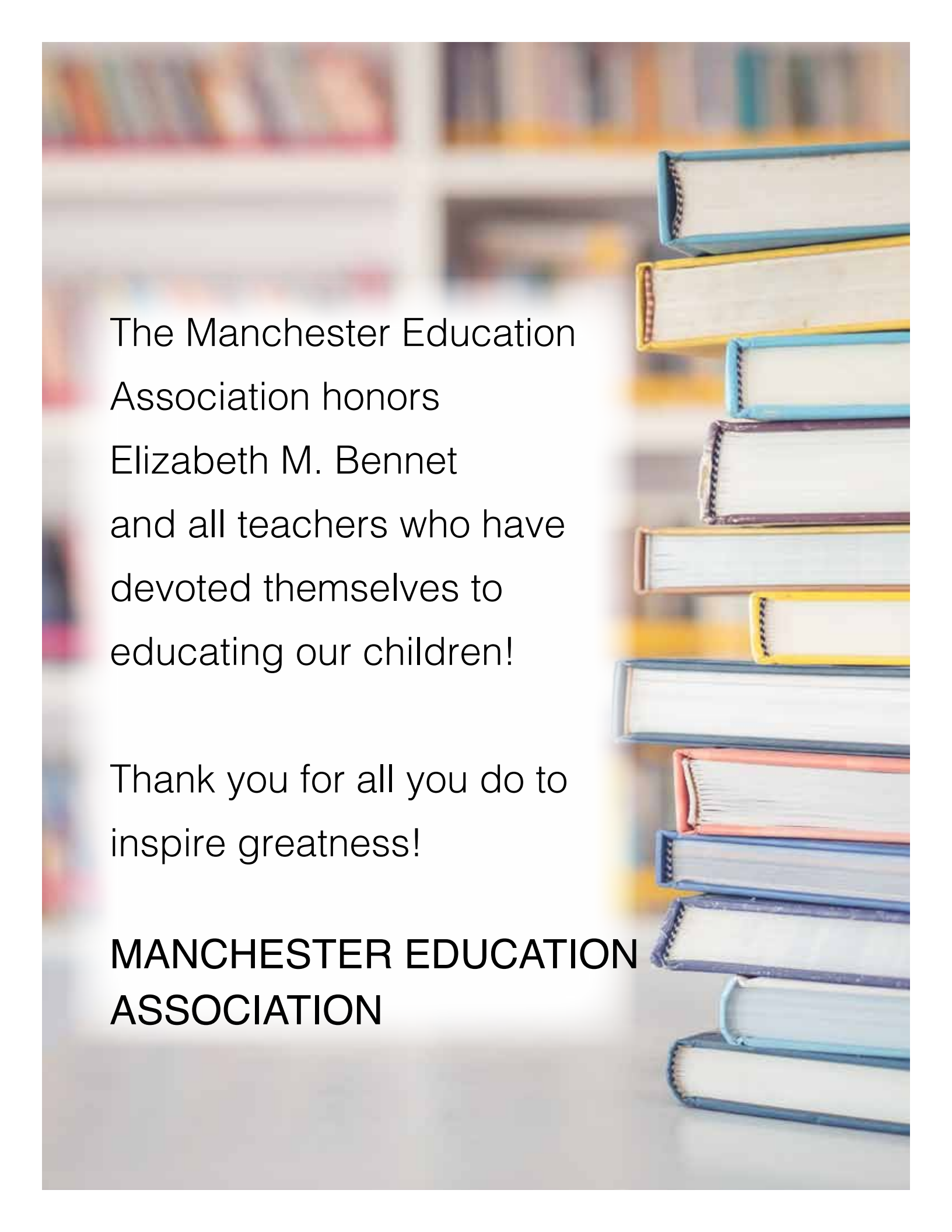
**Town of Manchester Department of Public Works** for their technical  
and installation support.

**Bill Ludwig**, Town Troubadour, for his gift of a song about Elisabeth M. Bennet.



*The Town of Manchester is now the steward of this statue,  
giving it loving care to ensure its longevity for  
future generations.*





The Manchester Education  
Association honors  
Elizabeth M. Bennet  
and all teachers who have  
devoted themselves to  
educating our children!

Thank you for all you do to  
inspire greatness!

**MANCHESTER EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION**

*Elisabeth Bennet*

A life led devoted to Manchester's schools  
Elisabeth Bennet, she rewrote the rules  
A teacher to teachers, she loved her pupils  
She brought many new ways to learn

Let's put a library right in the school  
The more books the better, a great teaching tool  
Active and healthy kids learn better too  
A center for recreation

In 1913, the Ninth District School  
A fire broke out while the classrooms were full  
Elisabeth went back into the flames  
Till she was sure all nine-hundred children were safe

Miss Bennet, a true pioneer in her day  
Brought in movie projectors as visual aids  
A champion of using the arts as a way  
To broaden our children's minds

Nineteen sixty-one, Barnard Junior High  
Was unveiled a brass plaque that proudly decried  
From that day forth the school would be named  
For Miss Elisabeth Bennet

Elisabeth Bennet, a proud legacy  
A woman devoted to community  
A century later her influence still seen  
For generations in Manchester

*Written and sung by Bill Ludwig,  
Manchester's Town Troubador*

