

HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL IS COMPILED

Miss Rankin Writes Of Progress Of District Since Opening In 1855

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Boundaries for school districts were fixed by New York State Commissioners of Common Schools in 1812 and A. Ward, Carpenter and Sons map of 1820 shows Dobbs Ferry in School District No. 2 of the Town of Greenburgh. The first school house was located on Ashford Road in the Abram Storms, later Jacob Stymus property (later King property) near the east boundary of Dobbs Ferry. It was a small two-story house containing a room for younger children on the first floor and another room on the second floor for older children. The school house stood over a brook. Children from Ardsley and Dobbs Ferry and the countryside around attended this school during the years until 1855.

The Union Free School District of Dobbs Ferry was established by a vote of the residents on March 15, 1855. This District No. 9 elected a Board of Education of six members, e.g. John J. Storms and George Schmidt for one year terms, Joseph Banks and Meyer H. Meyer for two-year terms and James H. Pooley and David McClure for a three-year term. John J. Storms was elected president and Joseph Banks as secretary and librarian, and L. W. Lawrence was appointed collector of the tax which was levied in an amount of \$430 for the ensuing year. The school building stood opposite the head of High Street on property of Courtland Palmer, father in law of Mrs. Henry Draper, now the Draper Lane Apartments. In that first year of 1855-56 the number of scholars on the register was 80 and the average number in daily attendance was 49.

W. C. Sampson, the teacher, paid a salary of \$500 per annum, complained on Sept. 17, 1855, that there was not enough room in the schoolhouse to seat all scholars comfortably. Therefore the board arranged on April 5, 1856 to hire the Robert Courtwright house (now the site of Dick's Cabin) for a schoolroom at annual rent of \$60; and Rebecca A. Graham was employed as assistant teacher for \$200 a year. Even with the extra school room, by Dec. 30, 1856 accommodations were too small, and a special meeting of the residents

was called to consider the purchase of a new school site. In February, 1857 it was voted to raise \$2,500 for building a school house, \$1,200 to buy the site, \$400 for furnishings and \$350 for grading the lots. The site on High Street, directly opposite the present Post Office in the center of the village, was purchased from David McClure—three lots measuring 40x120 feet. Hugh Downey was builder of the new school house which was completed in August, 1857; it was a frame and concrete structure, two stories high with a basement above ground on the hillside, containing ten or fourteen classrooms. It had two entrances on High Street and two doors on ground level to the playground at the rear.

The school was divided into three departments: primary, intermediate and higher code of instruction. W. C. Sampson, teacher at \$550 yearly salary, and Martha W. Terry at \$250 salary and Rachel Breckels at \$150 salary were responsible for this large and modern school house and its many classes. There were 388 scholars; and by 1862 the enrollment had increased to 411 children between the ages of four and twenty-one—and only three teachers to instruct them. In September, 1859, G. Sidney Smith was retained as principal at a salary of \$600. The Board of Education established regular vacations at one week during the Christmas holidays, and three weeks in August.

The first school house and its land were sold to Courtland Palmer in 1857 for \$1,000. The school levy in 1860 was \$1.50 compared with \$430 in 1855. The Union School on High Street (later Main Street) was used continuously with the teaching staff increasing from three in 1857 to five in 1863 and to eight in 1871 and thereafter until 1896. On that date the teachers were receiving a salary of \$600 and the principal \$1,400. The tax levy on the residents amounted to \$11,100.

By this date the Board of Education knew that the school was too crowded and it was necessary to build a new one. At a meeting of citizens called for the purpose on Jan. 3, 1895, the voters approved the acquisition of a new site and the construction of a new school building. \$60,000 was to be raised, and the D. Appleton estate on Broadway, just north of Ashford Avenue intersecting, was purchased. Bids were opened for construction of the school in September, 1895, and Thomas Brennan was the lowest bidder; carpenter work was done by P. F. Gillespie. A brick building with a tile roof was completed and dedicated on Dec. 23, 1896, and opened to

the scholars on Jan. 11, 1897. The old school property on Main Street was sold for \$8,000 and the building was razed. The tax levy in 1897 had increased to \$17,100 on a real estate assessment of \$5,295,883, that is a tax rate of \$2.72 per thousand. In 1898 the tax rate was \$3.09 in 1901 to \$3.30, in 1905 to \$3.40 and \$4.00 per thousand in 1909 in order to pay the cost of improved program of education in the school.

A kindergarten was established in the public school in 1897. Physical training and manual training were both introduced as departments in 1906. A commercial course was first offered in 1912, and the gymnasium was also equipped that year. A school nurse was added to the staff in 1912 but shared with Hastings and Irvington Schools.

In 1909 funds were voted by the residents to add a new building at the back of the school building on Broadway to be used for a high school. Growth in attendance continued which necessitated another wing added to the building in 1922. For purposes of comparison, we note that in 1923 the school accommodated 660 pupils and the salary schedule of teachers was \$1,200 minimum and \$1,800 maximum for elementary school and \$1,400 to \$2,000 for high school faculty. A sale of \$58,000 in bonds in 1926 made possible the purchase of the Cooper estate adjoining on the north. In 1931, the Cromwell estate adjoining was likewise purchased to provide more land so that a new high school building might be built.

Financing a new school building was most difficult during the depression years and long delayed but finally it was made possible by a Federal Loan and a grant as a Federal Works Project under the supervision of the Public Works Administration. The architects of the splendid new school building were Knapp and Morris, general contractors were George A. Fuller Co., while John T. McCormick was president of the Board of Education who had the special help of three loyal citizens, Robert J. Eidlitz, Abram Bastow and Mayor J. J. Walker. The commodious Junior and Senior High School Building of the Union Free School District No. 3 was dedicated on Feb. 11, 1936. It is a modern school in every respect, well built of stone, most artistic in lines and set back from Broadway in the midst of green lawn and beautifully landscaped, also provided with ample parking space, a large auditorium for public assemblies, and generous playgrounds. Its total cost was \$802,093, of which \$576,093 was paid by the School District. At this date, 1936, the principal's salary was \$6,000 and the teachers' salary schedule was \$1,400 to \$2,800. School budgets increased year

by year as the enrollment grew and as the standards of education were improved. A superintendent (the position had been created in 1929) was paid \$6,600, the principal of the elementary school was \$3,050, while the enrollment numbered 506 in elementary and 361 in high school in 1947. As standards and costs of living soared so did school costs when we find in 1949 the high school teachers were receiving \$3,000 to \$4,300 and elementary \$2,800 to \$3,950, principal \$5,500 and superintendent \$7,500.

At this time, the Board of Education considered the advisability of consolidation of schools with the neighboring village, Ardsley, in order to gain greater flexibility in courses of study and to effect economies. After a thorough investigation was made by a citizens' committee and after many months' study by the board, it was recommended that a proposal for consolidation be placed before the residents. After much public discussion in 1951 a vote was taken in January, 1952, which showed a majority against consolidation of Dobbs Ferry schools with the Ardsley school.

Many loyal citizens have served on the School Board, each for a term of three years or more and many reelected for continuous terms. They are too many to name here but we shall indicate in terms of the presidents of the Board of Education as follows: John J. Storms 1855-59, W. K. Couzens 1859-61, James Wilde, Jr. 1861-65, Rev. S. J. Prime 1865, A. O. Willsea 1866-67, George L. Osborn 1868-75, D. Ogden Bradley 1876-78, James Patterson 1879, George B. Taylor 1880, Andrew C. Fields 1881-82, Joseph Hasbrouck 1883-84, Hugh Downey 1895, Charles P. McClelland 1895-1916, Robert Denniston 1917-1921, Charles P. McClelland 1921-27, John T. McCormick 1927-42, Eugene R. Verdin 1942-46, Emory R. Roraback 1946-48, Richard Hazen 1948-51, Edward G. Bathon 1951-52, Hudson W. Kellogg 1952-54, Noble P. Cowles 1954-date.

After another year in 1953 the board in considering the future growth of the school felt it necessary to acquire more land on which to build a second elementary school. The space in the present building was not sufficient for the increased attendance and classes had spilled over into basement rooms which were not considered suitable for such use. Facing this situation, the Board of Education explored vacant land in the village of sufficient acreage for a school building, and after careful study suggested a portion of the Arnstein estate on Ashford Avenue near the east boundary, and as it happened across the avenue from the site of the first little red schoolhouse of 1855—exactly 100 years ago. The proposal placed before the voters in the fall of 1955 included the purchase of 2 1/4 acres of land and architect's plans for a new elementary school building estimated to cost a little more than a million dollars. The majority of the voters of District No. 3 did not approve the proposal.

All members of the Board of Education who have worked devotedly toward solving the problem of inadequate school facilities are still facing that impasse. As a temporary measure some classes meet in half-day sessions. The Elementary School of 1897 is sadly in need of repairs, for which the residents in February, 1956, voted approval of such expense in the amount of \$20,000. Also a committee of citizens representing all phases of opinion regarding school problems has been appointed by the Board of Education to re-study the present situation and to recommend proposals of secure adequate school space to accommodate a constantly growing school population. As of September, 1956, Dobbs Ferry enrolls 779 pupils in its elementary school and 527 in junior and senior high school—a total of 1,306.

The faculty now consists of 67 teachers, two librarians, one nurse, two principals, one superintendent, four clerks, one clerk of the board, and 11 custodians. The total monthly payroll is \$346,65 for a total of 97 employees. The salary schedule for teachers is \$3,600 minimum and \$6,000 maximum for those with A.B. degree and \$3,900 to \$6,900 for Master's degrees. The school tax rate in 1956 is \$23.79 per thousand of real estate valuation. Actually the school system may be envisioned as over half a million dollar a year business. Educationally, Dobbs Ferry schools have a very high standard of instruction, provide all the

advantages that a modern public school can offer, prepare students who rank well and are accepted in colleges with the highest requirements.

The good citizens of Dobbs Ferry recall with nostalgia their days in public school and many remember with joy their teachers who, in some instances may have remained on the faculty of the schools for decades and have taught several generations of the same families. For instance, Miss Brigit Gibbons became a grade teacher in 1896 and taught one year in the old Union School on Main Street, moving to the new school on Broadway where she continued in the upper grades until 1951; she is remembered as a splendid disciplinarian and much beloved. Miss F. Marion Wood, a high school teacher of English joined the faculty in 1912 and remained until retirement in 1950—a capable and respected instructor. Mr. B. M. Sheppard, a principal well liked and held in high esteem, served from 1912 to 1926. Miss Margaret Burlock, a third-grade teacher from 1922 to 1954 was much loved. The first superintendent was John A. McGinness who gave good administrative service from 1929 to 1949. Many residents will recall other teachers who were their favorites.

The little country school house of 1855 which accommodated 80 scholars at a cost of \$430 has grown into a school system including 1,306 students, preparing them for a higher education, at an annual cost of \$587,000. Here is one full century of development of public education, typical of most schools in the United States. Note that six months after the Public School was opened it 1855 it became crowded. The Union School of 1857 was crowded with 411 children by 1862 and had to be replaced by a larger building in 1897. Additions had to be made to that building in 1909 and again in 1922. Another large and modern high school building was needed in 1936.

It is not readily apparent to many citizens that the cost of educating young people is shared by the State. This has been the case since 1812. The modern concept of the State's financial responsibility to education began in 1925. Financial support by the State to local school districts is commonly referred to as State Aid. This aid is distributed on

the principle that both the State and local school district must share the costs of education. Reduced to simplest terms state aid is paid out on the basis of either a state aid formula or a flat grant, and is calculated on the basis of Average Daily Attendance. Generally speaking the more local valuation there is to tax, the less state aid is payable. Consequently as a general rule, wealthy communities receive state aid through a flat grant and the less wealthy receive aid through application of the formula. The formula aid is substantially greater than the flat aid grant. Dobbs Ferry on the basis of its evaluation receives aid through the flat grant. About 20 per cent of the district's total expenditures are borne by the State.

The improvement in educational standards can be indicated statistically by noting the cost of education per pupil. In 1855 the cost per pupil was \$5.38 per year. One hundred years later in 1955 the cost per pupil per year for total expenditures was \$531.14. The Village of Dobbs Ferry has kept pace with the best in education in the County of Westchester and the State of New York.

Sanctuary Group To Aid Hospital

Will Make Compresses For Rosary Hill Hospital At Meeting Monday

Members of the Rosary Sanctuary Society of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, Hastings, at their first Fall meeting on September 9 will make pads for patients at Rosary Hill Hospital.

Residents interested in supporting the project can donate old linens. Funds are also required for purchase of cellulose packing.

Mrs. George Brown of 619 Warburton Avenue and Mrs. John Brazil of 535 Warburton Avenue, Hastings, are receiving donations.

PLANNING TO MOVE
Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Skinner of Osborn Manor Apartments are planning to move to Arc Wood Estates in Briarcliff Manor the end of this month.

RESERVISTS TRAINING AT FT. BELVOIR

Lt. Wm. Alley, Jr., Commanding Twenty Local Men At Camp

A group of 20 Army Reservists from the Dobbs Ferry area has arrived at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to join approximately 1,250 men in two weeks of training in military engineering.

The reservists are members of the 939 Camouflage Company, composed of five officers and 15 enlisted men and commanded by First Lieutenant William R. Alley, Jr., of 522 North Broadway, Dobbs Ferry.

During their tour of active duty at the Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir, the men will receive training in methods of camouflage—their military specialty—as well as field fortifications, construction of timber-trestle and Bailey bridges, rigging, scouting and patrolling, mine warfare and compass reading.

Next week, the entire encampment will go on a 36-hour bivouac.

After completing their training on Sept. 7, the reservists will return to Dobbs Ferry, where weekly meetings at 18 Oak St. will continue throughout the year.


Mrs. McLoughlin Succumbed Sat.

Hastings Resident Died At Grasslands At Age Of 75 Saturday

Mrs. Agnes M. McLoughlin, seventy-five, of 26 Elm Street, Hastings, died Saturday at Grasslands Hospital, Valhalla, after a short illness. She was the widow of William D. McLoughlin.

Born in New York City, she was brought to Hastings at the age of two. She was a communicant of St. Matthew's Church. Surviving is a sister, Mrs. Susan A. Moffat of Bayside, Long Island.

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FRIDAY, SEPT 6
Five Year Ago
Ending his first mo...
United States is Georg...
Dusseldorf, Germany,
making his home with...
Mrs. Burnham Bowden...
ley-on-Hudson for the...
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One Dobbs Ferry gr...
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They are Miss Edw...
daughter of Mr. and...
ward F. Bowe of Ce...
Apartments and Mis...
McHenry, daughter of...
Mrs. William McHenry...
rock Avenue. Miss Bow...
tered the Sisters of O...
Mercy Convent in O...
S. C., and Miss McH...
enter the Grey Franci...
at Mount Saint F...
Peekskill, and plans to...
teacher.

Rabbi Frederic...
whose appointment to...
burgh Hebrew Center...
Broadway, Dobbs Ferry...
nounced during the Sum...
begin his duties at th...
on September 14.

Miss Anne Storms, de...
Dr. and Mrs. Harold A...
of Broadway and Mis...
Karsten, daughter of...
Mrs. Charles E. Karsten...
Street, are expected...
September 2nd, after...
six week in Europe.

Gregory Bathon, son...
and Mrs. Edward Ba...
Broadway, will leave on...
ber 14 for Hamilton...
Clinton, N. Y.

Mrs. Lucy Roberts...
granddaughter, Carol Co...
Wednesday to return...
home in Sarasota, Flori...
spent the Summer visit...
her paternal grandpare...
and Mrs. Fred Collins...
gan Park Avenue.

Dominick DeLuca, w...
Infantryman, who is now...
in Austria, has been...
to the rank of corpora...
announced this week.

Mr. Samuel J. Dawson...
Street, returned to his...
at the Dobbs Ferry Po...

We asked... and they...
"We wa...
Some mo...
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Before lon...
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*FREE
There's plenty of information...
they work... installations...
you today for yours or planing...

Com