

NUTLEY SCHOOLS

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RECORDS show, that, in the area now known as Nutley, the first school was in existence as early as 1794 in what was known as the Lower District. Here at the corner of Passaic Avenue and Avondale Road (now Park Avenue), was located the "Old Stone School house." This school was built on land given "for school purposes" by John K. Spear. (This branch of the family used the spelling Spear.) About 1850 this building was replaced by "The Passaic Avenue School" also called "Avondale School" and the "Little White School." This school was in use for about fifty years.

On the other side of the Third River (Yantacaw Brook) in the Upper District a one room school was erected on land called "Water Cress Patch" now Bloomfield Avenue and Centre Street. No date for the building has been secured but records of Frank Speer give 1825 as the date when his great-grandfather, Albert Chappell, taught in this school. In 1844, the building was moved to the southwest corner of Franklin Avenue and William Street. Later this building became a two-family house at what is now 41 New Street.

In 1856, Henry Stager donated land for a school at 65 Church Street. This two story frame building burned in 1874 - the year that "Nutley" separated from Belleville and became the Township of Franklin-and was replaced in 1875 by a two story brick building. In 1946 the Nutley Board of Education leased this building to the Nutley Historical Society and plans were set in motion which resulted in the formation of a Town Museum and headquarters of the Society.

The Upper and Lower District were consolidated in 1889 and a High School Department was formed. Classes were held on the first floor of the Passaic Avenue School.

In 1890, it was known to the already expanding township of Franklin that the increased number of school children could not be accommodated in the Passaic Avenue and Church Street Schools. Richard W. Booth, then a young man, and who for nearly a generation was a member of the Board of Education and its president for nineteen years, arranged for the purchase of the Duncan property as the site of a new school. Records show that John Rusby, merchant, and William H. Boardman of the Board of Education helped secure this valuable property. What was known in 1890 as "School Park" (twelve acres of land and buildings) was purchased for \$15,000. The Duncan home at the site of the present library was included in the deal. Several buildings were demolished but what is now our Town Hall was remodeled and used for High School and Intermediate Department classes, all held on the second floor.

In 1894, the voters of the school district directed the trustees to erect a new school not to exceed \$30,000 and the first unit of the Park School was occupied.

In 1907 a second unit was built which housed all grades. The third unit was built in 1922. These three units after 1934 were occupied by Junior High School classes. In 1956 the units of 1894 and 1907 were demolished and a modern structure was added to the 1922 unit. In 1957 the entire building operated as a modern Junior High School.

In 1959 the High School was organized on a four year basis and was transferred to the former Junior High School. The old High School was named Franklin School and was occupied by grades 7 and 8.

Franklin Township became the Town of Nutley by an act of the State Legislature on March 5, 1902. Yantacaw School was built in this year. The town population continued to increase and in fifteen years three more new schools were built - Washington School in 1911, Lincoln School in 1915, and Spring Garden School in 1917. Soon additions were necessary to the five elementary schools - Park in 1922, Spring Garden and Washington in 1927 - Lincoln and Yantacaw in 1929.

This increase in school population soon necessitated more classrooms for High School students and in October, 1927, the new Senior High School on Franklin Avenue was occupied.

With the growth of the town progressing in the western section, both Lincoln and Spring Garden Schools were soon overcrowded.

A new school of modern construction was built, and occupied in September 1955 by elementary school pupils. This school was named the Paul Radcliffe School in memory of the Superintendent (1920-1934) under whose supervision the major building program was developed.

While public schools were expanding two parochial schools were built - St. Mary's School opened in 1921 with additions in 1926, 1952 and 1958. Holy Family School was built in 1950. A new addition has been completed in 1958.

Superintendents who have served since 1910 are John R. Beachler, 1910-1920; Paul R. Radcliffe, 1920-1934; John A. Spargo, 1934-1944; Floyd E. Harshman, 1944-1952; since then Ehud Priestley, Robert A. Flood and at present Dr. Anson B. Barber.

Tags

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