

Century-Old Norwood School's History Told

BY MRS. SANDRA COLBERT
 Editor's note: Norwood will mark the centennial of its elementary school, formerly the Union Free School, this year. Norwood correspondent Mrs. Sandra Colbert has written the following account of the school's history.

NORWOOD — One hundred years ago bricks made in Raymondville were drawn by horses to a building site on 26 Prospect St. and used to construct the Norwood Elementary School.

Then known as the Union Free School, the building served as the high school and elementary school until February 1953 when the present high school opened. Looking back, we find many changes have taken place over the century.

At 26 Prospect St. stood a large home owned by Mrs. Phelena Ashley which was moved to 36 Prospect St. before 1885, making room for the new school. The house, now an apartment building, remains at 36 Prospect St.

The original eight-room school was constructed and furnished for \$15,000 and was one of the first high schools in the Massena-Potsdam-Norwood area. Three courses of instruction (classical, scientific, and general) were offered from the six employed teachers and one music instructor. Studies included English, math, science, language, and penmanship.

The two classrooms on the second floor across from the present library used to be one large room with a stage and rostrum at the north end. The principal's office and a small library were located behind the stage. Study halls and student activities were held in this large room where sometimes 100 students would gather for a spell-down; the principal would reward the winner with a \$1 bill, recalls Arch Royce, a 1918 graduate.

The library, although small, met the needs at the time and was established possibly as early as 1885. School board records dated Aug. 16, 1886 note that Mr. Fletcher had taken inventory of library books, their value recorded at \$413.10. Former students recall using a well-supplied school library in 1912. Sometime in the early 1900s it became the policy of the school board to locate books in the village library because there was no trained school librarian.

Richard Hann of Norwood, principal of the Union Free School from 1944 until 1949 recalls a small makeshift library being upstairs in a 10 ft. square room. The room now housing the library was two separate classrooms until 1954 when they were renovated into the current library.

Pupils And Teachers

Students walked to school, some walking four miles or more over snow and ice. Those living in rural areas could attend high school if they were fortunate enough to find a village family to room and board them from Sunday through Thursday nights when school was in session or if they could handle a horse and buggy. Their team would be parked in the private barn of a village resident or in the James Creighton Livery Stable or Donahue Livery Stable, both located on Mechanic Street in Norwood. Young ladies drove horse and buggy; Susan Lyman recalls Eunice and Murty Babett and Doris Farmer driving into school with their horse and buggy and parking them in her father's barn on Prospect Street and she recalls Doris Farming riding into school on horseback at times.

School board records of 1887 record the salary of music teacher Mrs. Belle Barnard to be \$5 a week and teachers of the senior department to be \$7.50 each week; there were 39 weeks of school during the school year; \$300 was to be raised by the district to purchase the new piano; and the records tell how the astronomy, geometry and history of Greece textbooks were selected by the school board.

It was in October of 1887 that the school board gave its approval to purchase the bell which is still hanging from the belfry of the school. This bell would ring twice in the morning and twice at noon; the first bell telling students classes would soon begin. By the second bell students were to be seated in their classrooms. The bell ceased to ring in 1954 when electric bells and clock systems were installed.

Regents examinations were given as early as 1886 in the Norwood High School.

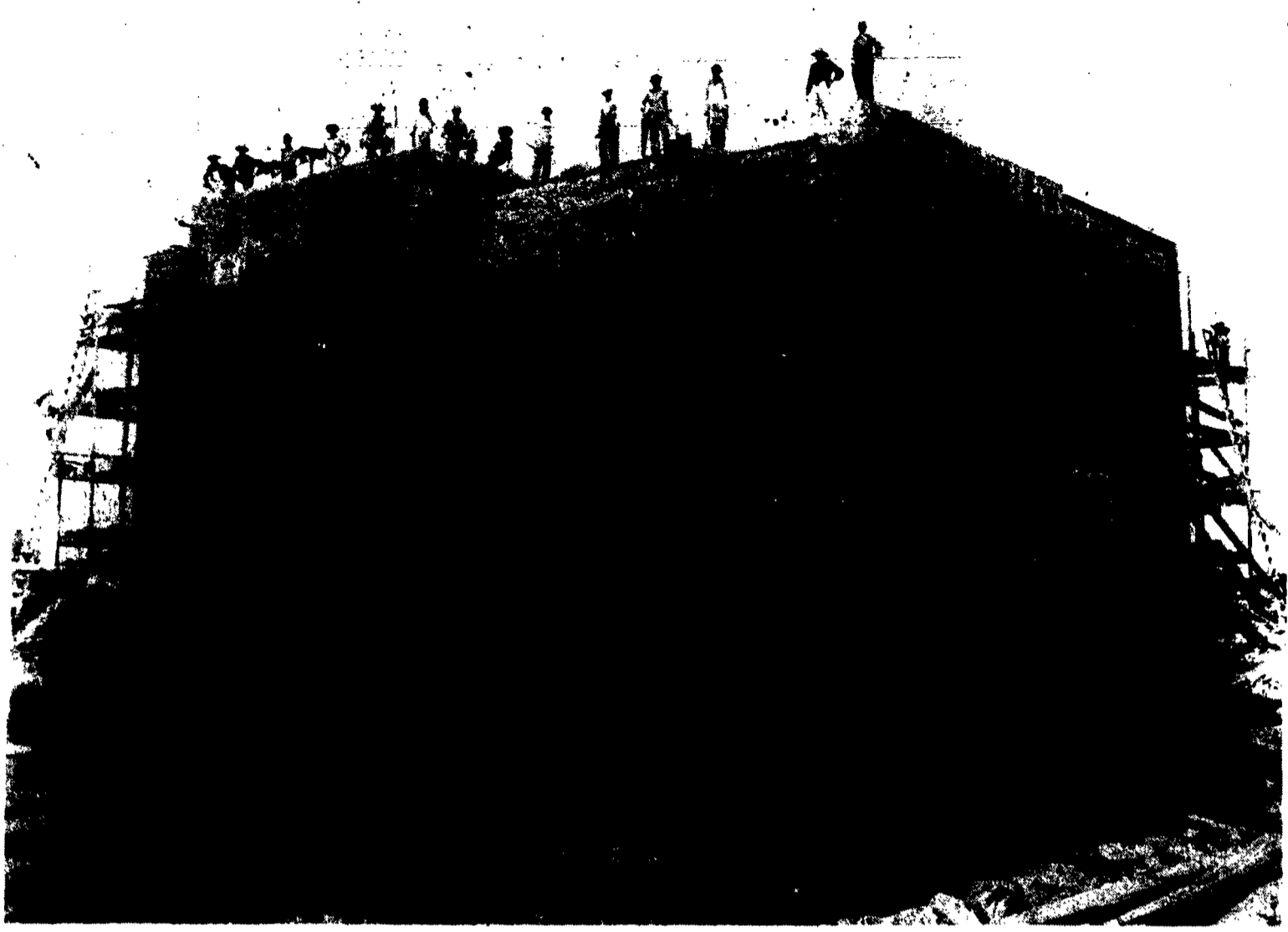
In 1911 the school board heard complaints because of no recess time, thus instructed the principal to hold recess for the lower grades.

By 1908 river water supplied the bathrooms then located in the basement where individual toilets would flush periodically and simultaneously each day.

Attend Meeting, Chamber Exec Urges

The Potsdam Chamber of Commerce is encouraging downtown business people to attend a special meeting of the Village Board on Thursday. At the meeting, which will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Civic Center, the Potsdam Village Board will review parking recommendations from the village planning and zoning boards.

Chamber executive coordinator Michael P. Griffin said, "The proposed changes will have direct and indirect effects on businesses throughout the downtown area. It's important that business people attend this meeting to obtain accurate information on any changes. Too many rumors are caused by inaccurate information."



BUILDING THE SCHOOL — This c. 1883 photo shows the building of the Norwood Union School on Prospect Street, now the Norwood Elementary School. Some of those shown are believed to be the following: Willie Smith, (white shirt, by front door at ladder) Andy Peterson, (with

plans) Adolphus L. Yale, Charles Worthing, Harry Clark, Rollin Reed, John Wells, Henry Wells, Waite Reynolds, Homer Loveland. The two little girls are Lucia Yale, daughter of Adolphus Yale and Susan Smith, daughter of Willie Smith. (Photo loaned by Norwood Museum)

regardless of when needed. It was not until 1944 that the modern restrooms, now located upstairs, replaced the ones in the basement.

As for drinking, that was a different story. Should you need a drink, you would design your own cup from a supply of paper located near the front door of the school, run outside to the pump midway between the school building and sidewalk, then hand pump your water. Later you would use the tin cup hanging from the pump, the same tin cup every other student would drink from.

Paper cups were not carelessly thrown to the ground; the grounds were immaculate. Mrs. Belle P. Barnard, music teacher at the school, encouraged students to bring extra pennies to purchase flowers and shrubs which were planted along the sidewalks and around the cobblestone fountain. Parents also donated flowers from their home gardens. The students planted and helped maintain the grounds.

Cobblestone Fountain
 The cobblestone fountain was constructed by George Dove of Bicknell Street, Norwood and was given to the school by an alumni class. Just when the fountain was constructed is not known but former students recall the fountain standing with its base graciously spraying from its water and top before 1912. They also remember their music teacher's love for the outdoors and her beautification projects involving them to keep the grounds in order.

"That area around the fountain was sacred ground. We did not step on or throw anything down," proudly explained one former student. "Every year we planted a tree in the school yard," said another. A former teacher recalls a student picking one little tulip. Mrs. Barnard searched through the school all morning until she found the guilty lad. The fountain and school yard were a beautiful site in northern New York and people would drive from miles around to view them.

It is believed the fountain was shut down sometime between 1953 and 1955. The Norwood-Norfolk school board has given approval to have the crumbled fountain restored in celebration of the school's centennial year.

Early School Days
 When the Union School opened in 1885 Robert McDonald was principal. There were two semesters, a winter and spring semester.

The school board record dated

Aug. 21, 1888 notes the following financial statement:

Expenditures	
Teachers salaries	
For year	\$2,748.00
Bonds and interest	1,700.00
Balance on roof	122.60
Repairs and	
New seats	151.16
Shade trees	5.88
Piano	300.00
Bookcase	8.23
Maps and books	
For library	233.53
School supplies	84.36
Tuition refunded	
And tax returned	60.50
Fuel	395.25
Janitor salary	131.11
Cash on hand	1,681.03
Total	\$7,636.64
Income	
Balance on hand	967.55
Supervisor of Potsdam	1,124.31
Supervisor of Norfolk	11.10
Board of regents	633.42
Non-resident tuition	249.90
Musical (cannot read)	32.56
Proceeds of	
Entertainment	12.25
Sale of bricks	101.54
Tax on property	4,504.01
Total	\$7,636.64

By 1900 a teacher's salary would total \$320 and the principal would earn \$1,000 a year. Teachers would have as many as 45 students in their classes, which began promptly at 9 a.m. and were dismissed at 4 p.m. Each teacher would carry a small bucket of coal to work with them on winter school days to supply the coal furnace which heated the building.

Dedicated Teachers
 In the early 1920's employment with the paper mill and railroad attracted immigrant families to the Norwood village. Dedicated teachers taught these new pupils the English language as well as carrying on with their daily teaching duties.

It soon became necessary to use the home at 5 Harrison St., now owned by Elwood Royce, to teach some 35 first grade students. Seats, desks, and blackboards were placed in the parlor and dining room of the house to accommodate schooling. It is believed Miss Lottie Yale taught the class.

Elementary classes were then held in the brick house located at 29 Prospect St. across from the school then owned by Mrs. Margaret Powell. Mrs. Charles Wilber, the former Irene Levison, remembers teaching in this building. The first grade classes would use the two

front rooms downstairs and the second grade would meet upstairs. There were 20 to 30 students in each class and the music teacher would walk over once a day to give instruction. In 1927 Miss Levison taught 45 third-grade students at 29 Prospect St. Classes continued to be taught there until the new high school was occupied by high school students attending the Union Free School.

Stories are that classes were also held in churches and businesses in Norwood due to overcrowded conditions. With the early school board records I found a letter dated 1930 from the casket factory located in Norwood offering a front room of their business to house one of the grades. That building is now located on Bernard Avenue and houses the village equipment.

Apparently in the late 1920s and early 1930s the State Education Department in Albany recognized the poor conditions prevailing at the school such as poor ventilation, overcrowded classes, unsanitary restrooms, insufficient lighting, and so forth. An effort was made by the school administration, staff, and school board members to educate the residents about these conditions, hoping to convince them of the need for modernization and expansion.

Correspondence between Albany and Norwood prompted meeting after meeting, but the taxpayers voted down by a large margin all plans for improvements. In December 1929 plans for a new Norwood School were submitted by Carl W. Clark, architect in Cortland, but those plans were also rejected.

Additions To The Building

It was not until 1902 that the front porch or entry was added to the original school building. Also in 1902 a 40 by 60 ft. addition was built on the back of the original school building for a cost of \$26,000. This addition included two classrooms for elementary students, an academic room, a library and an office.

In 1917 the gymnasium and rooms over the gym (a commercial room, three high school classrooms, and one laboratory) were added at a cost of \$27,000. Dr. Williams of Ogdensburg was architect and Amos Clute of Potsdam was contractor for the project. Nellie Williams, a daughter of Mr. Williams, taught English at the school in 1918. Both the grand-

children and great-grandchildren of Amos Clute have attended the school and three of his great-grandchildren, Chad, Micah, and Heather Colbert, are now students there.

The 65 by 43 ft. gym featured dressing rooms and balconies at each end with a seating capacity for 300 spectators. A reception formally opening the gym was held the evening of Feb. 8, 1918 with music provided by Prof. Taylor's orchestra from Potsdam. The graduation class of 1918 acted as ushers for the event.

Former students recall the junior prom, a big event for them, being held in the gym. They recall the school nurse, Mrs. Jennie Bowhall, caring for students in her office, then located in the little room off the gym now housing the mimeograph equipment.

It was around 1974 when the dressing room and balcony at the north end of the gym were removed to provide more room and new showers installed in the remaining dressing room.

After centralization in 1946 the Norwood-Norfolk High School was completed in 1954. Five years later the new wing was added to the Norwood Elementary School and the obsolete coal furnace replaced by steam operated boilers which heat the building today.

In 1954 the music room located in the basement was relocated upstairs and a cafeteria installed in the basement. The cafeteria was moved to its present location in the new wing in 1974.

Graduating Classes
 The first graduation exercise was held in 1888 in the Norwood United Methodist Church for the ten graduates of the Union Free School. The graduates were Nathan E. Avery, Mrs. Mabel E.

Ashley Drew, Mrs. Emma A. Leonard Jones, Mrs. Margaret Hale Powell, Mrs. Stella Phelps Bell, Mrs. Jessie Phelps Ashley, Leslie A. Pease, Edna A. Smith, Hugh H. McDonald, Romaine J. Lalone.

A class graduated every year from the Union Free School except in 1897. The largest class graduated in 1939 with 44 graduates.

The last graduation exercise held for the high school graduates of the Union Free School was held in 1949. Those graduating were Laura Boorman, Helen Clark Molnar, Mary Grandy Embury, George Harris, Joseph Hughes, Bernard King, Ann Laramay Morgan Myers, Richard McCormick, Kenneth McDonald, Joyce Mansback, Robert Morgan, James Nichols, Lloyd Stanford, Robert Steinburg, Ann Tebo Morgan, Robert White, Douglas Wood.

Early Basketball
 Norwood's basketball history dates back as early as 1914. A member of that first team recalls practicing in the old Catholic church on Bicknell Street and in the upstairs of the Donahue Livery Stable before the gym was built. The team started more or less as a Boy Scout team with scoutmaster William Flanders serving as coach. The boys team played in the new gym for the first time the winter of 1917 playing against Fairville and Bowling.

Team members were E.J. Wilkins, captain; Lyle Jenkins, center; Harold Wood, left forward; Jerome Gately, right forward; Loren French, right guard; Walter LaBrake, left guard; Eugene Harris, Carl Clark, and Arch Royce, substitutes; Kenneth Andrews, manager; and William Flanders, coach.

Team members raised the money to pay their coach his annual \$300 fee until 1922 when the board of education assumed the responsibility of hiring and paying a coach.

Young men playing on the team would catch a train leaving Norwood to travel to out-of-town games, sometimes as far as Waterbury, Malone, or Ogdensburg. Staying overnight was necessary for them at times.

Team members would walk to and from practice after school. For example, Dennis McGinnis of the Austin Ridge Road would walk the four-mile hike home after school to help his father with the milkings, would walk back to school for 7 o'clock practice, then walk home after practice.

In 1922 the Norwood boys basketball team coached by David Polo won 12 out of 17 games, scoring 386 points to their opponents' 306 points. They lost the championship game that year by a score of 26 to 31 when playing against Potsdam Normal High School in the old St. Lawrence University gym.

The girls basketball team was an equal match for the boys team and defeated the boys one night after school in a practice session. The girls team, organized before 1917, was an exceptional team in New York State and won 26 consecutive games within the two-year period of 1922 and 1923. Team members playing at that time were Mildred Wilber, center; Mrs. Charles Wilber, the former Irene Levison, forward; Dorothy Haggatt, forward; Mildred Phanomann, guard; and Irene French, Irene Perry and Edith Phillips.

Back in 1917 the Athletic Club was first organized to conduct the school athletics. Walter LaBrake served as the first president and Erastus Wilkins as vice-president.

Today the school building may not be the same, and the 17 classroom teachers may instruct their 390 students from different textbooks, but the happy memories and lasting friendships of years gone by will always be.



A LATER VIEW — This postcard shows the Norwood Union School after its completion. Note the decorative fountain at left. (Photo loaned by Norwood Museum)

Midtown Notes

There will be a special meeting for all club members at 2 p.m. Jan. 17 in the Midtown Apartments community room to discuss the pet policy.

Joyce Mitchell from Massena called on her mother, Margaret LaShomb, last Sunday. Gladys Page is visiting her daughter and family in Toledo, Ohio.

Laura Stanton has returned home from Canton-Potsdam Hospital. Glad to have you home, Laura.

Clara Longale has returned from a visit with her sister in Montreal.

Edith Benjamin was taken to Canton-Potsdam Hospital last Thursday by the Potsdam Rescue Squad.

Walt and Oleta Shatraw entertained Bun and Nancy Shatraw and Gay Hanson Thursday evening for ice cream and cake. The occasion was Gay's birthday.

Several people on the fourth floor

are sick and miserable with colds. Gladys Belmont came home from visiting her sister near Syracuse who had a bad cold.

We, the tenants at Midtown, are very sorry that Alma Sheets will not be working in our kitchen from now on. We are glad to hear Millie Gilmore is doing well after her operation.

Sewer Meeting Set

The Potsdam Town Board will meet with all owners of property in the Unionville Sewer District at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 17 in the Unionville fire hall, to discuss where the new sewer lines will be laid and when the work will be conducted. All property owners are urged to attend.

Mayfield News

Ruth Trudeau visited her niece in Solway over New Year's. Anne and Holly Stone spent last weekend with her grandmother, Lena Waite.

Francis Stale and Harold Boothe were patients in Canton-Potsdam Hospital recently. Christie Dalland had the misfortune to fall on the ice and break a bone in her arm.

Thelma Hulse has returned to Mayfield from her vacation. She was down in Hudson, Fla for three weeks and while there, visited historic St. Augustine. Then, she traveled to New Orleans for a week and stayed in the French Section. She enjoyed a boat trip on the Natchez on the Mississippi River. She also saw the Delta Queen.

Don't forget our coffee hour Jan. 16 at 9:30 a.m.

Debra Drive Seniors

Liz Gibson has returned home from the hospital. We hope she is feeling much better. Arlene Crump is a patient in the Canton-Potsdam Hospital. She is in room 306 and cards would be appreciated.

We extend our deepest sympathies to David Harmer and family on the death of Eleanor Harmer.

Sherm and Denora Paro visited Denora's daughter, Phyllis LaBrake, of Hannawa Falls recently.