

SCHOOL DAYS



REFLECT

Reflections of Past Days In Middletown Schools and Places Nearby



Compiled By Middletown High School History Staff

JUNE 1979

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SCHOOL DAYS
REFLECTIONS OF PAST DAYS
IN
MIDDLETOWN SCHOOLS

AND
PLACES NEARBY *Roger Martin*
COMPILED BY *April 1, 1982*

The
MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK STAFF

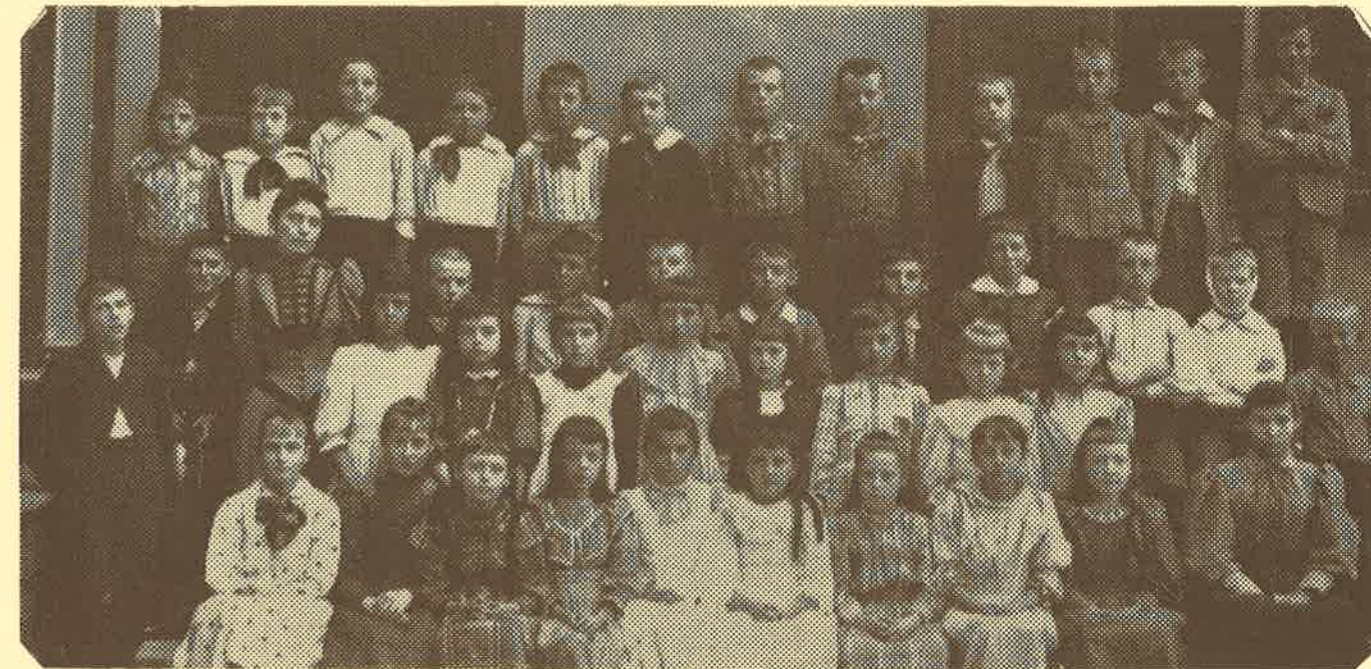
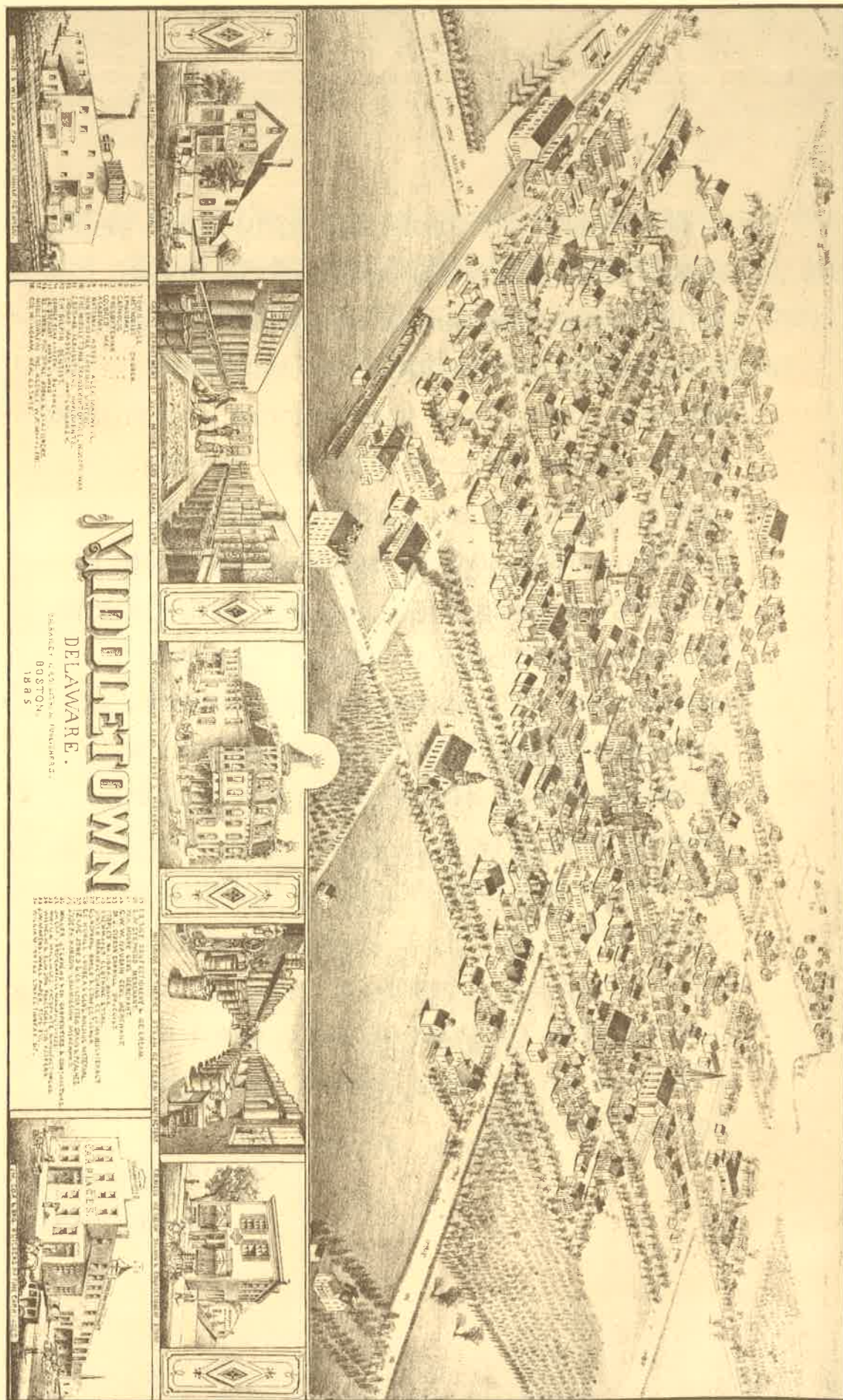
G. SCOTT LAWRENCE
SECTION EDITOR
A SUPPLEMENT TO
THE 1979 **CAVALIER**

The Staff of the 1979 Cavalier wishes to acknowledge the help of the many persons from Middletown, Townsend, and Odessa who contributed to this supplement. Without their contributions and support, this project would have been impossible.

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The Year 1979 marks the forty-ninth year that Middletown High School on South Broad Street has served the public as an educational institution. For over two decades, the school was without a yearbook to record its students and their school activities. As the school approaches its golden anniversary, it seems appropriate to assemble a book that reflects upon students of these earlier years. Therefore, it was agreed that the yearbook staff assemble an appropriate publication. Included in this publication are articles and photographs dealing with students at M.H.S. when it was located at the Old Academy Building on North Broad Street, as well as a section on early schools in Townsend, and of course photographs of students who went to school at the present Middletown High School Building.

Scott Lawrence
June, 1979



Pupils of the Middletown School in the year 1895. Top row left to right: Randolph Gary, Edgar Rowe, Julian Foard, Martin Stevens, Joseph Comegys, Grover C. Talbot, Owen T. Chance, Harold Roberts, Oscar Whitlock, William Cartu, Tony Crouch, Elwood Dodd. Second row, Homer Painter, Charles Davis, Mary Price, teacher; Elwood Brown, Cuthbert Peverley, Walter Taylor, Ernest Solloway, John McGuire, Harry Brady, Edmund Blome, Elwood Reed, George McClarey. Third row, Queenie Dodd, Sylvia Moore, Eva Whitlock, Mollie Tusli, Ethel Rowe, Minnie Smith, Ada Roberts, Bersha Gray. Fourth row, bottom, Ethel Ginn, May Davis, Blanche Messick, Blanche Roberts, Lillian Cleaver, Estella Suydam, Bessie Craddick, Ada Davis, Blanche Ginn and Amy McGuire.

THE MIDDLETOWN ACADEMY

BY VIRGINIA JOHNSON



The history of the old Academy, collected by the late Dr. W.S.P. Combs, spans 134 years. During the years, until it was closed as a school in 1928, the academy provided education for future industrial and civic leaders as well as for those who would be the backbone of this state and nearby communities.

Looking back over the years, it must have been a proud day, Aug. 24, 1826, for the village of Middletown, as there were many visitors attending the cornerstone laying ceremony for the Middletown Academy. Arnold Naudain, the ninth grand master of the Grand Lodge, AF and AM of Delaware, and a member of the academy's board of managers, conducted the ceremony, the first such held by the then 20-year-old Grand Lodge.

Afterwards the grand master accompanied by about 50 of his fellow-Masons and probably most of the spectators attended a service at the nearby Methodist Episcopal Church so it is recorded in the history of Grand Lodge.

Lotteries

Money for the academy had been raised by lotteries, authorized by the General Assembly on Jan. 31, 1824, and again on Feb. 9, 1825. The first lottery permitted the five managers — Mr. Naudain, Richard Mansfield, Outten Davis, William H. Crawford and Richard E. Cochran — to raise a sum not exceeding \$6,000. The building, as described under the General Assembly law, was to be "Sufficiently large to contain rooms for an academy and for elementary schools and also a room or rooms as they (the managers) may think proper and necessary: Provided, however, that the room for public worship shall be free for all denominations of Christians." The second lottery was for \$4,000, "Making together the sum of \$10,000, clear of all expenses," but the act authorizing it stipulated that the academy have a library and that any funds left over be used for investments "for the endowment of the said academy."

With this money, the board of managers, the personal of which had changed before the academy was incorporated Jan. 21, 1826, bought the land and contracted for the building, as it was described in the contracting bid advertisement, was to be "two stories high with two rooms on each floor, and a hall 10 feet wide in the center, with cellar underneath of the whole; to be built of the best material and in a plain but substantial manner." Henry Little was awarded the contract for \$5,000.



Land Purchased

Land for the site of the academy, six acres of it, was bought from Mr. Outten for \$1,000. Because the tenant on the six acres refused to surrender possession of the ground, Mr. Crawford, another member of the board, deeded over on May 13, 1826, two acres of land adjoining the first plot. It is on this that the academy with revenue from rent and eventual sale of it.

The extra six acres was a mixed blessing for the board of managers, though, as tenants can provide problems. Throughout the minutes of the managers' meetings there is constant reference to outlays of money for leaking roofs, broken fences, faulty heaters and plumbing, and general upkeep on the building. One tenant, who lived in a room of the academy during the 1830's and 40's, constantly complained, particularly about the size of his rent.

The education of young people commenced in the Middletown Academy Oct. 15, 1827, under the care of the Rev. Joseph Wilson, who was in charge of the classical school. His salary was \$400 a year, paid on a quarterly basis. Miss Isabella Anderson was in

charge of the "female school," primary grades for girls.

Students, it was advertised, "will be thoroughly instructed in the different branches of a good English and Classical Education with Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Composition, Elocution, Mathematics and the Greek and Latin languages." There were two sessions of school a year with a short vacation between sessions. An education in the English branches cost \$3, and with mathematics or the languages the charge was \$10 each session. The money was to be paid in advance. Boarding the students in the community cost \$40 a session.

A voice of dissension, crying "Down with it", appeared in Delaware newspapers concerning the choice of Mr. Wilson as teacher shortly after school started. The board of managers, charged with seeking patronage by their selection, debated for a time about suing the newspapers for printing the anonymous letter to the editor.

The storm subsided and the life of the school went on serenely. Teachers came and went, sometimes in the middle of a school session. The board of



the Middletown School periodically sent requests to use a portion of the academy building for classrooms; all were rejected. Two additional managers were approved in 1829 by the General Assembly for the academy's board. Tenants complained and were pacified. Trustees were elected and died or were removed because of non-attendance. And half the volumes in the library were reported missing at one time.

Trouble again started in the 1840's, a period when the number of students fell off considerably. Charges in a petition signed by a number of citizens of the area against the academy's management by the board of trustees were presented to the General Assembly in February, 1845. In the petition it was requested that the General Assembly appoint a committee to examine the books of the board as only "the most wilful mismanagement could have ... hurled the institution from its favorable public nuisance." It was suggested, also, that the academy be closed and its property sold, giving the proceeds to the state general school fund. A committee of the General Assembly investigated and reported that they "after duly weighting and

considering the matter and all the facts presented therewith, find nothing to substantiate the charges of sectarianism and favoritism as averred by the petitioners, and therefore your committee unanimously agrees to report that in their opinion the allegations preferred are unfounded."

During the next ten years the finances of the school must not have improved as the trustees sold some property in 1856, and considered taking a \$2,000 mortgage, but sold a house and lot instead. The next decade was better for the academy as a dining room and kitchen were added in 1865. The school was prospering so much so that in 1872 the building was enlarged by a \$4,700 room addition measuring "25 feet front and the same depth as the present building. The school being in a very flourishing condition under the management of the Principal Hudson A. Wood and the number of pupils increasing we deem it proper to make the addition."

School Requests

Requests from School Districts Nos. 60 and 94 had continued to be sent to the academy board through the years for the use of a room in the building and eventual

unification of the school bodies. Being members of a private school board, the trustees refused the requests until 1876 when they agreed to permit School Districts Nos. 60 and 94 the tenancy of the academy beginning that September. Rent was \$5 a term, but this was later lowered to \$1. The academy trustees would elect three of their number each year to serve as a school board with three commissioners from each of the two districts. Although the agreement between the trustees and the districts' commissioners was on a year to year basis, these terms continued with the trustees maintaining the building and furnishing the rooms until 1921. At that time the academy board raised the rent of the building to \$1,000, out of which it had to maintain the building and pay the insurance. The rent was raised again in 1925 to \$2,000.

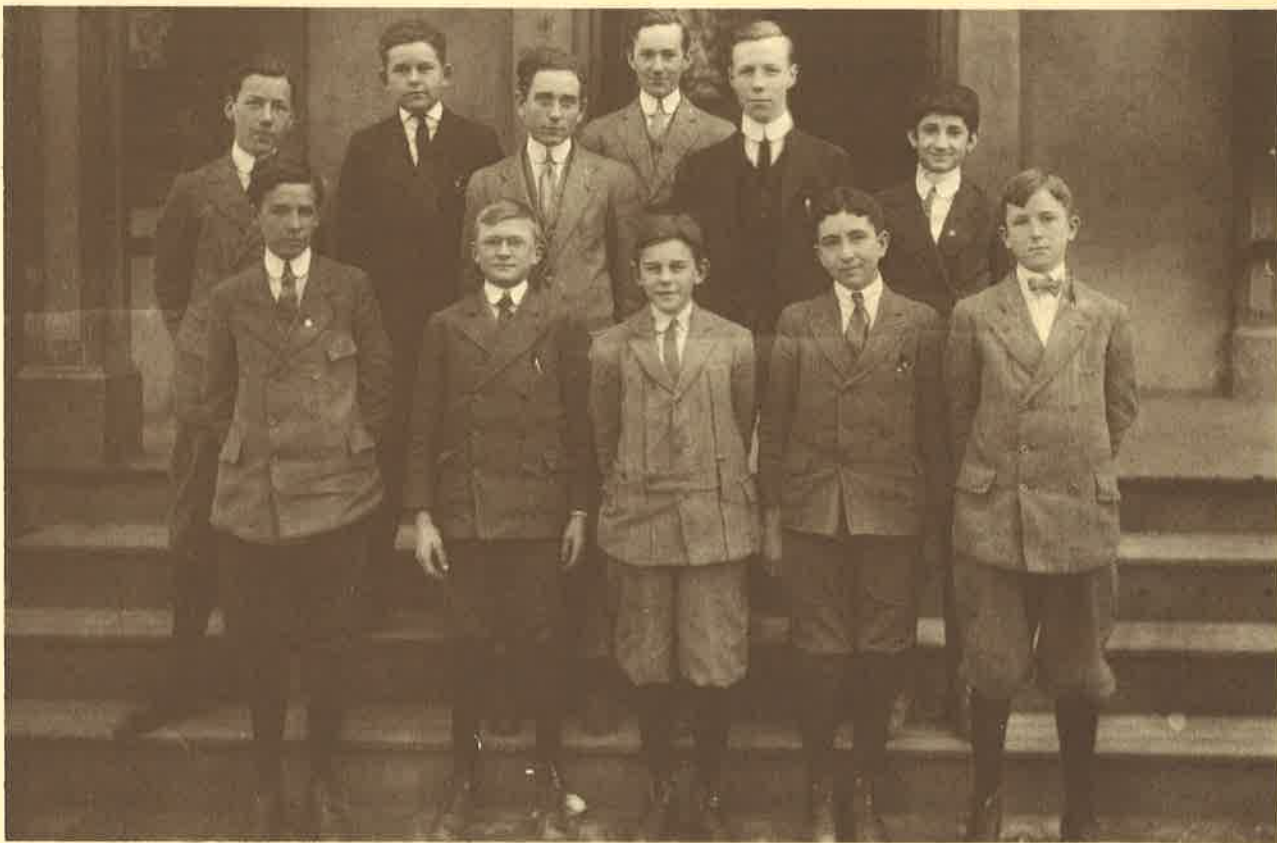
The early years of this century only brought bad luck to the academy board. In 1900, the minutes report that finances were in such bad shape that the board's treasurer had to buy a farm property of the corporation in order to save the mortgage. Two years later the board was again under public fire concerning its management of property, but nothing came of the charges after the board printed in the newspaper the articles under which it had originally been chartered. Fire struck the school building in January, 1903, causing "considerable damage", which was repaired by April. Ten years later the last of the original lots belonging to the corporation were sold. From then on the board operated with money derived from stocks and bonds and rent from its various buildings, one of which was occupied by the post office.

The Class of 1913



Girls at the Academy around 1911; Back row L-R: Hanna Kirk, Sarah Buckworth, unnamed, unnamed, unnamed, Ethel Baker. Middle row: Rose Evans, Blanche Cleaver, unnamed, unnamed, Laura Connellee, unnamed, Mary Evans. Bottom row: unnamed, Helen McDowell, Alice Boulden, Miriam Berkman, Bertha Manlove.

Boys at the Academy around 1911; Back row L-R: Tim Hukill, Raynor Carrow, Sudler King, Kendall McDowell, John Hukill, Alexander Berkman, Frank Tyson, George Shaw, Charles Meyers, William Price, Theodore Whitlock.



Class of 1913 at the Academy

Back row L-R: Anna Berry (Tobin), Laura Connellee (Pitts), Mary Evans (Hicks), Walter Wiest. Front row: Elizabeth Gibbs, Miriam Berkman (Harris), Rosetta Evans (Ellison), Frances Simmons (Carpenter).



Class of 1914 at the Academy

Back row L-R: Raynor Carrow, Frank Tyson, George Shaw, Theodore Whitlock, Alexander Berkman. Front row: William Price 3rd, Orah Spry, Alice Boulden, Sarah Buckworth.

Seven girls and one boy graduated from Middletown High School in 1913. Classes in those days were of course much smaller than they are today, and many students left school early to go to work or help on the farm.

Topics of essays read at the June 13, 1913 commencement exercise give an idea of interesting subjects of the time. Anna Berry recited "Suffragists and Suffragettes", Walter Wiest's essay was entitled "The New Gateway to the West", Laura Connellee recited "Byways of Panama", Mary Evans recited "The Lure of the Frozen Desert" (a saga of the South Pole), Elizabeth Gibbs followed with "In the Balkans", Frances Simmons recited "The Poet of the Sierras" and Rosetta Evans' essay was entitled "Camp Fire Girls".

The Hon. Henry C. Conrad addressed the class at their commencement exercises. The years immediately following 1913 saw the U.S. involvement in "the Great War". Like many other young men in the area, Walter Wiest enlisted. He unfortunately fell victim to mustard gas and spent the rest of his life in a Veteran's hospital. It is interesting to note that a bridge on Route 13 just below Odessa was named in this honor, with members of the class of 1913 participating in the ceremonies.



M.H.S. class of 1918 l. to r.: Leane Ladley, Letitia Pool, Marion Pinder, Grace Brady (Pool), Lydia Redgrave (Fisher), Florence Kohl (Heinold), Alva Whitlock (Vinyard), Millie Rosenberg, Frances Stafford (Corchran), William Meyers.



M.H.S. class of 1920 Back row l. to r.: Edward Records, Claude Fouracre, Daniel Bingnear, Frank Jones. Front Row: Wilson Ginn, Margaret Caulk, Purnal L. McWhorter, Jr.



Graduating Exercises

... of the ...

Middletown High School

Class of 1918.



The Middletown High School at the academy building during the 1920's was home to several top notch baseball teams. M.H.S. won State baseball champion honors in 1927, 1928, was runner up in 1929, and state champions again in 1930. The first football team was organized in 1928, and the varsity letter was introduced in 1927. Soccer was played at the school in earlier years. Several tennis courts were also built on the academy grounds.

The search for more space became a major topic of discussion during the 1920's, and it was agreed that the most practical thing to do would be to construct a new school building. Plans were drawn, and construction of the new Middletown School began in 1928. Pierre S. DuPont provided major funding for construction. 1929 saw the last class to graduate from the Old Academy building, which was then 103 years old. The new building at this time was nearly completed. The first students arrived at the new Middletown School in September, 1929. It was surely a big improvement over the "yellow prison" as the academy building was known to be called. The new building was equipped with such modern things as science and agriculture labs, drinking fountains, and auditorium/gymnasium, and large, spacious classrooms. The colors of blue and white were also made the official school colors during the 1929-'30 school year.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE ACADEMY

The size of classes at the Middle Public School increased steadily during the first two decades of this century. By 1920 school officials began to realize that more space was needed than the Old Academy building could provide. A new addition was added to the building in 1920 to help alleviate the overcrowded conditions.

In 1921 further steps were taken to give students more room. The second and third grade classes were then held in the second floor of the Post Office building (where the M.O.T. Head Start is now located). In 1922, fourth grade classes were moved from the academy building to the Sunday School building adjacent to St. Anne's Episcopal Church on Green Street. Fifth grade was held on the second floor of the Justice of the Peace building next to the Firehouse on South Broad Street.



"Our New School House"

or

How it was built

It ought to be against the rule. For children to be so long without School. It has been almost a year, still we have no Teacher here. To take the children, in his way & educate them day by day. The Tax-payers are thinking - & some do say there is a cause for this very long delay. There's one thing sure "It is ashame" for certainly somebody is to blame. It is supposed There were plan's as early as May. To erect a **Public Building** right away. Then arose a question! Who should be the man to construct a building on an imaginary plan. There were some who thought - & their belief did express that as a Tax-payer carpenter David Wells would be best. But then the Building Committee as his figures did stare. And concluded they knew a cheaper man elsewhere. So after awhile their man they found and lo! He was a resident of Middletown. Now with due respt. to this carpenter Mr. Fosterior's Jake to construct this building, did undertake. But of his task he weary grew, for he thought they surely would never give through. As to the Foundation on Mr. Lynams part, it was complete for he understand the art. Then the mortar & bricks; I am told, was shaped into an unfinished chimney, by a little Dutchman whose Cognomen is, Charley Reybold. The plastering was awarded to nonresidents of the town. The lowest-bidders being Mevssers Johnson & Brown

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They started to labling; a delay; then a rush to see the ^{end} of the job they employed Mr Tush. It was near the close of Saturday afternoon - but none thought of a fugilistic display so soon. When along came Mr Barns who about a board bill did cuss. So with Mr Js charges there promised to be a lively tuss. Barns with a brick, Johnson with a shovel went for each other, but friends interferred which ended the scuffle. Now these Masters knew, to get anything out of their bid would be a tight squeeze. So while shelling corn & cloves the fit weather all passed over. & the plastering job was caught by the freeze. Now the demands for the Hall, the committee can not meet. Simply because Johnson's job is incomplete. There there was the painter who the job wanted. And what proofs of ability before the Commissioners was flaunted. A close Calculatun or estimate he makes, & tells precisley how much Lead & Oil it takes. He mixed his paint - so some do say; & hired an assistant, so much per day; then on his contract - he does begin when lo; his prospects are blighted by Latin & Sin: for: as to Bossing & Wages they don't think it fair. Because of both; they can't have an equal share, so two with one did not agree. So the results were they had a spere, which was not settled by Harmony.

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Oh what music. How the folks did take it in. The charming music of the Painters chin for it was plain & very loud which soon attracted quite a crowd. I will name the three who their case did press. Respectfully Jacob Daniels, Clayton & Hess. Although the latter two no great professions do make to finish the job they did undertake. Although there has been charged and a committeeman did make his compile ain't yet inside & out they did continue to paint. Then comes one who gets the Boon. It and the Taxpayers Dance to a Harmonious Seven dollar Tune. It was not white wash that to the walls was applied but instead, delicate tints of Pearl & Pink they were dyed. Now to admire these rooms, they must be seen For where the walls are not bare they are coated with Alabastinc. Then there are the desks which commissioners will not place. For they can't tell which way the **Backs** out to face. but there is one thing upon which they agree & that is to let the unfinished work be. So that when they find the tuition man they will apply things according to his plan.

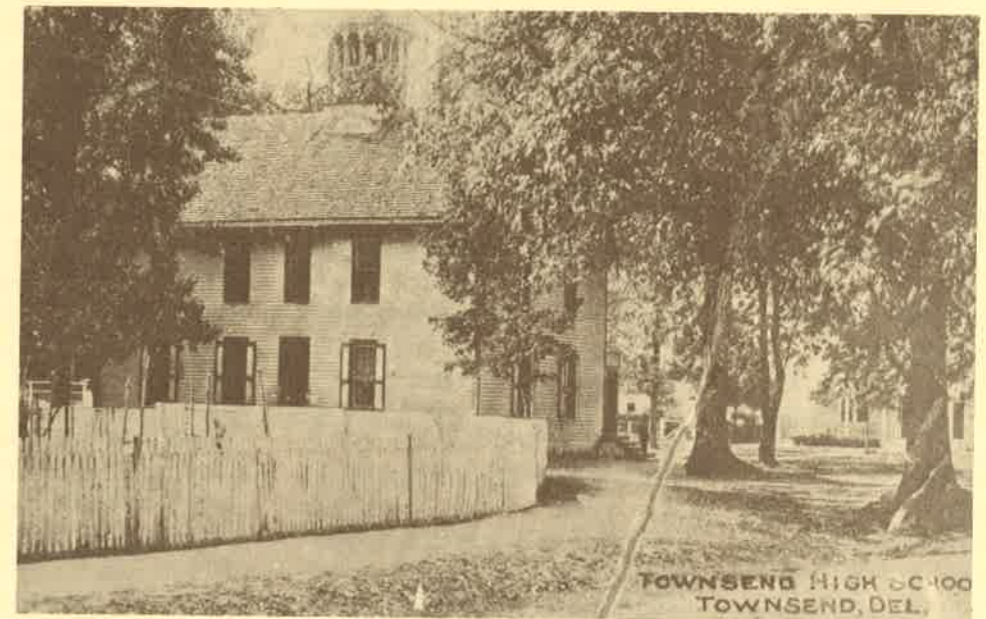
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View of Townsend's first school

Townsend School built in 1883



an Ornamental design termed a Cupola
On the base of which where, all may see
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Townsend Del
Jan 23rd 1884

Farewell
Yours truly
Old Stocking

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