

The Riverside Current

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Riverside School Celebrates Its 60th Anniversary 1933-1993

In the 1930's, milk was still delivered by horse and wagon to the grocery store where Ada's now stands. Owenoke Way had about four houses on it and was a wooded dead end. And in the years before

Riverside School existed, children who lived in Riverside attended the Old Greenwich School.

The Old Greenwich School bulged at the seams. Riverside parents lobbied strenuously for a school of their own and even took a door-to-door census in the late 1920's to prove the need for a school. They succeeded!

In November 1931, an architectural plan was chosen. And

in a simple ceremony held on April 1, 1933, the cornerstone of the new Riverside School was laid. A fifty-piece children's fife and drum corps from Old Greenwich provided music during the ceremony.

Among the items placed in the cornerstone were an English penny, a Russian kopeck, a French franc, and a quarter, dime, nickel

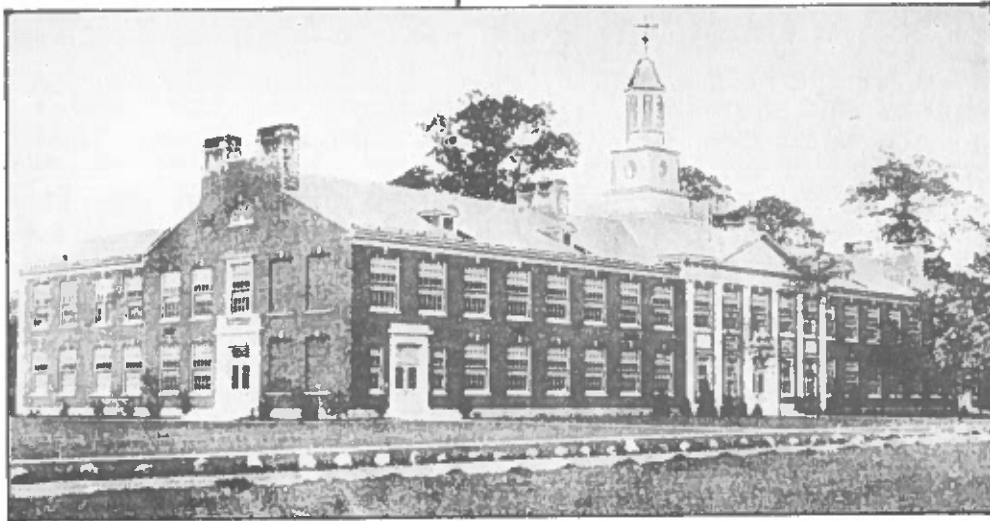
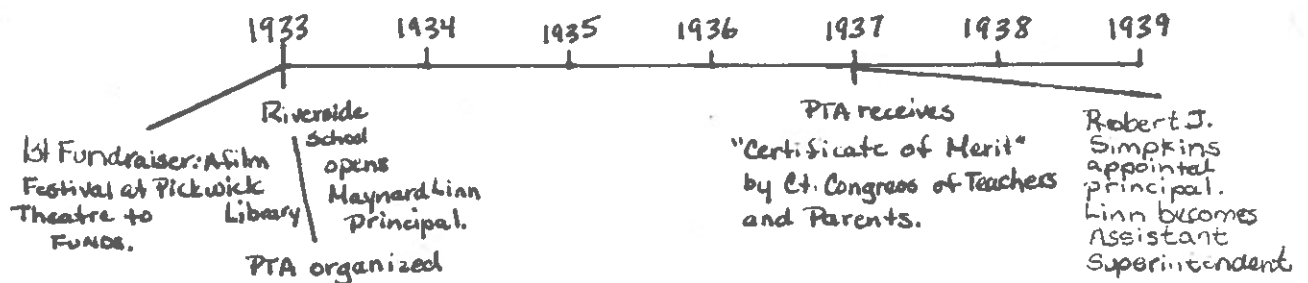


Photo courtesy of the Greenwich Historical Society.

and penny. Also included were newspaper clippings, a record of the work on the building plus names of all those connected with the school.

The Thirties



The War Years

During the Second World War, Riverside was an island unto itself. Gas was rationed, therefore "whole energies were centered on the community," explains former Riverside parent Mrs. Franklin Bloomer. "The school was an important place during those days. Not only were school activities here but many community activities took place here, too." People were registered for ration cards in the building. Because it had the largest hall in Riverside, the school was the site for scouting programs and dancing classes. To entertain the community, the PTA put on an annual spoof called the Riverside Revels.

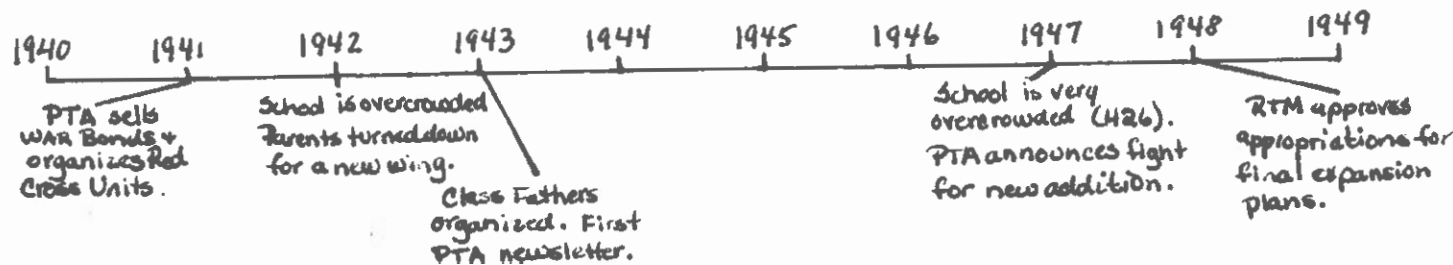
Students got used to having international friends. Many European and English children, evacuated from their homelands, were sent to Riverside to live with relatives until the war was over. "It certainly added a lot to our experience because we had two girls from Germany who, I later learned, had been driven out because their family was Jewish and they were running for their lives," recalled former student Barbara Muller Ornstein. "But that just seemed like everyday stuff to us then."

An overcrowded Riverside School needed more space and after waging

a six-year fight, the PTA got approval from the RTM for an addition in 1948. The following year, Old Greenwich School was under reconstruction and its whole student body occupied Riverside School in the afternoons. In 1950 the addition opened, giving the school a total of 23 classrooms, two kindergartens, two special subject areas, the library, a teachers' room, a multi-purpose room and a gymnasium. The school could now hold 675 pupils.

A very special part of the school was the cupola and some sneaked a closer look. As Joseph Hunt, a student who graduated in 1941, recalls, "I can still remember very vividly going up to the cupola. You have to take a ladder up there (from the second floor) and it's quite a climb. There's a vast attic up there that runs the entire length of the main building. In the center is the cupola and there are several ladders there. This school sits on about the highest ground in Riverside south of the Post Road. It's a tall building and with the cupola up on top it puts you way above everything. It's a beautiful view, especially on a clear day." Those who managed to get there left their names behind.

The Forties

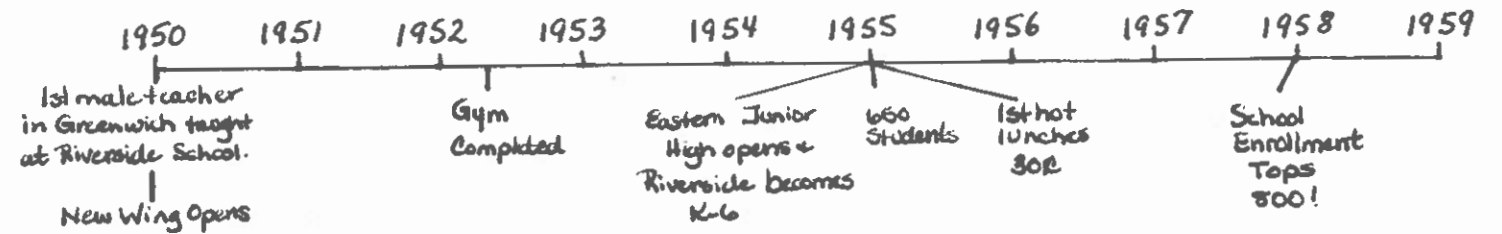


Baby Boomers

The World War II baby boom brought the school enrollment up to 800. All available space was in use--even the cafeteria and teachers' room were turned into classrooms. Eastern Junior High opened to relieve Riverside of its 147 seventh and eighth graders. Riverside's lunchroom was reinstated but also housed music classes. The homemaking room remained a classroom and teachers had to go from class to class to give sewing and cooking instruc-

tion. Industrial arts lost its classroom and became a cubicle. Dancing classes were quite the rage and the price was right--\$12 for pupils in fifth through eighth grades. "Pupils must wear white gloves," stated the school's 1955-56 Parent's Handbook. Graduation from elementary school was a serious occasion complete with caps and gowns. However, not all activities were so starchy formal. The baby boomer's favorite recess game was "bombardment".

The Fifties



Our Olympic Star

Skating star Dorothy Hamill, Riverside's most famous graduate, graced our halls in the Sixties. A



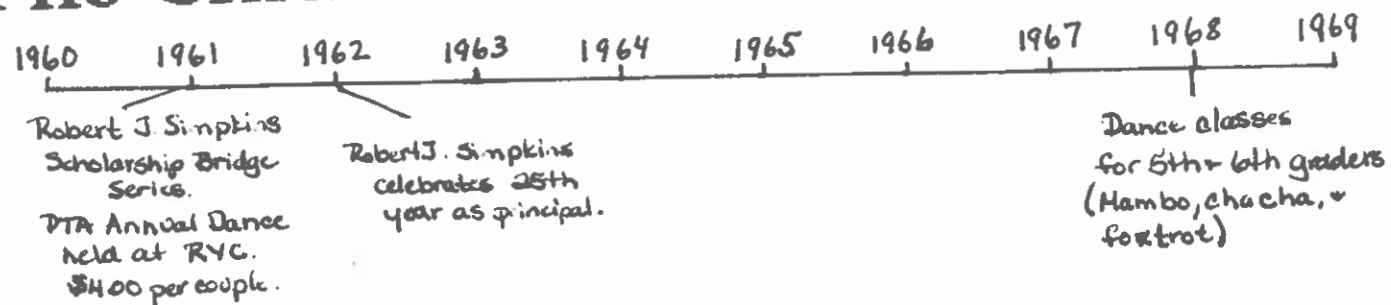
quiet and shy girl, she got her first pair of \$5.95 skates (at Caldor's) at age eight and began her illustrious career on Binney Park pond. As Dorothy skated more,

she had little time for anything else. In the third grade, her teacher Mrs. Marie Krumeich allowed Dorothy to arrive an hour late for school every day so she could fit in a few hours of skating practice, starting before 6:00 a.m. By the afternoon, she was bushed. More than once she was caught napping in her back row seat! But she worked hard at everything she did. A special friend of hers at Riverside was the custodian Mr. Nunzie Pagliaro. He watched her skating progress and provided friendship to this sometimes-lonely little girl.

Dorothy Hamill went on to win the Gold Medal at the Winter Olympics in 1976. Dorothy returned home after her triumph and was honored at the school. Children, thrilled to have her here, crowded around her. Principal Robert J. Simpkins gave her a charm bracelet depicting the school; the children gave her a stuffed camel, in recognition of her trademark spin, the Hamill camel which was a flying spin to a sitspin, with a spin coming out.

This edition of The Riverside Current was funded by the Celebrate 60 Committee, chaired by Leslie Jones and Jan Reid.

The Sixties



The End of an Era

For decades we were known as "Bob Simpkins' Riverside School". Robert J. Simpkins settled into the headmaster's office in 1937 and by the time he left almost forty years later, Riverside School had changed dramatically. Education in Greenwich went from a collection of individual schools to a system.

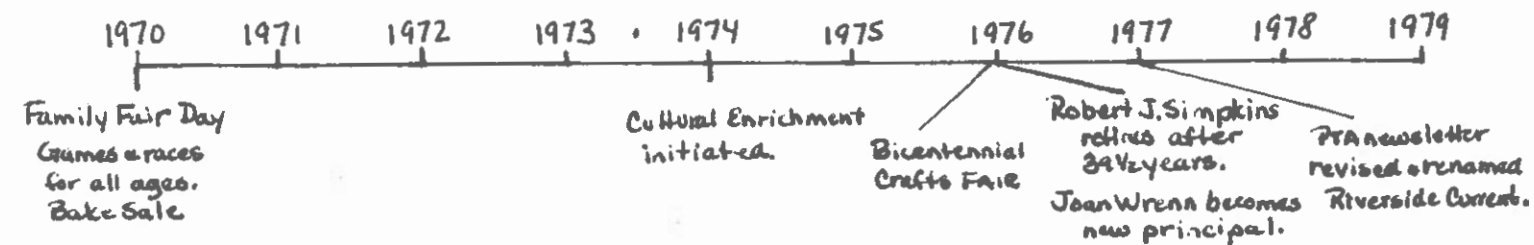
During the early Simpkins years, Riverside, like other schools, developed its own courses of study and reporting. It alone had an 8:00 to 1:00 school day, in order that fathers could take their children to school on the way to the train station and that mothers could take the children to doctors' appointments or sports programs after a home-cooked lunch.

But after a cycle of conforming as the town pulled the schools into

a unified system, Riverside seemed to find itself initiating innovative programs. We had one of the first school libraries and we were one of the first schools to develop a media center. Riverside was also one of the first schools in town to have its own screen and projector. And Riverside had the first men in elementary education in Greenwich.

When Mr. Simpkins retired in 1976, new principal Joan Wrenn inherited a well-oiled machine that benefited from some fine-tuning. During her six year term, she was to oversee the building rehabilitation program, introduce the multi-graded classrooms, spearhead the Neuberger and Lincoln Center programs, start the Talents Unlimited Program and put in place the first full-time TAG Center.

The Seventies





Riverside School is only as good as the teachers who work hard to inspire and challenge our children.

Innovators and Volunteers

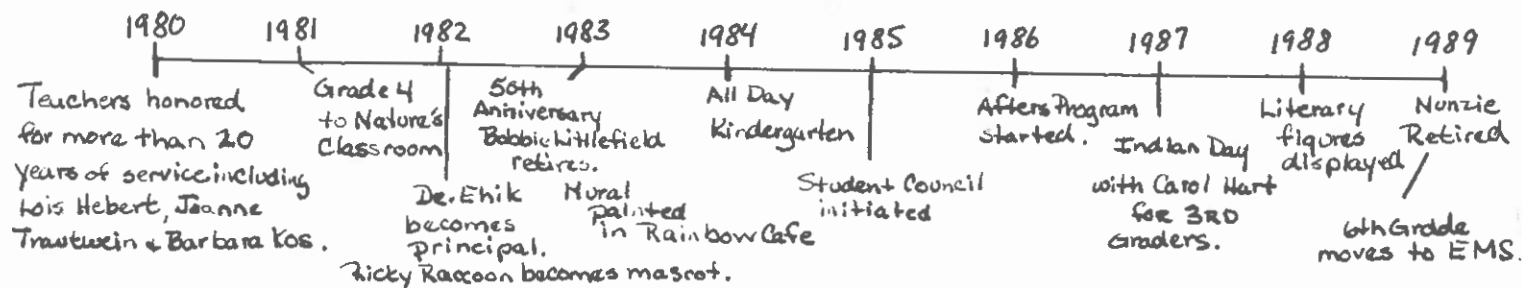
In 1982, Dr. Elizabeth Ehik became Riverside School's fourth principal and one to whom innovations are second nature.

In the early 1990's, Riverside piloted a math and reading scheduling (MARS) program designed to give each student more time in smaller study groups. Riverside again was innovative in its efforts to fund a computer lab at the school.

The school remains indebted to the many volunteers who over the decades have helped it remain strong. Starting in 1987, Riverside began naming a Citizen of the Year award and gave its first honor to Ada Cantavero, the candy store owner and unofficial social worker

for all Riverside children. In 1988, the school honored Kate McClelland, the Perrot Library children's room storyteller and literary resource. The following year, the Sound Beach Volunteer Fire Department was recognized for its commitment to helping others. In 1990, Bobby Littlefield, one of our retired kindergarten teachers, was thanked for bringing her love of nature to the school in the form of Audubon activities. Local artist Vella Shimora received the award in 1991 for handpainting the mural in the cafeteria. Last year, Jim Rawn was honored for his part in chairing the computer lab foundation.

The Eighties



Dear Riverside Family,

Celebrate 60 marks "Sixty Years of Excellence" at our school and is also the tenth year that I have been the proud principal of Riverside School. Our school has a history of excellent teachers, caring parents and wonderful students.

This year started with a special first day of school. Balloons, banners, and music greeted children and parents on September 2. An International Buffet Dinner and Talent Show was a tremendous success in spite of the blizzard of '93 and a rescheduled date. The Riverside Run marked its tenth anniversary; the Fun part featured an alumnae tent complete with scrapbooks, old pictures, and a message board. Former students and parents had the opportunity to tour the school and meet with Mr. Bob Simpkins, principal of Riverside School for 39 years. Our school birthday party was held on June 17; on June 18 our fifth grade students presented a program marking significant events from the 1930's to the 1980's.

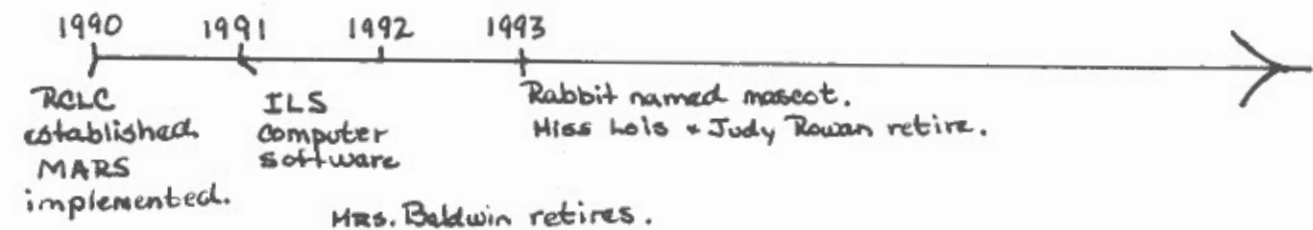
Other highlights of this school year included the International Arts Night and the RCLC Foundation computer gift to the school. On April 29, children in grades 2-5 sang songs from different countries, presented folk dances and demonstrated various art projects. Parents and special visitors shared objects of art from many parts of the world. The school received a computer lab and a grade 2 computer distributive network from the RCLC Foundation. These programs helped to individualize student instruction.

This year's fifth grade will be the Greenwich High School graduating class of the year 2000. As we look forward to the 21st century, it is important that we continue our commitment to excellence in education. We need to take the best of the past, focus on the present and move to the future. Parents and teachers working together can help ensure that students are well prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of a new century.

Fondly,

Betty Ehik

The Nineties



Our Fifth Graders



**The Future
High School
Class of 2000**