

UPPER POTTS GROVE TOWNSHIP  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

1885-January 1895  
Aug. 1915-June 1966

Each year the County Superintendent of Schools administered examinations to all teacher applicants. Rarely did all the applicants pass the test. Applicants who did not pass the examination did not receive certificates. The Upper Pottsgrove Board would not hire a teacher without the certificate. R.F. Hoffecker was the County Superintendent of Schools until about 1944 when A.M. Kulp became the new Superintendent.

In 1885, teachers earned \$35 a month. It slowly increased until the 1922-23 school year when they were paid \$100 a month. By 1942-43, the teaching salary was up to \$163 per month. Misconduct or poor performance meant suspension or request for the resignation of a teacher.

The School <sup>Board</sup> met in private homes for many years. The Board started contributing to the State Retirement Fund for Teachers in the 1919-20 school year.

In 1885, school was in session just 6 months, by 1917 it increased to a 7 month session, and in 1922-23, the school year was increased to 8 months.

In 1888, the Upper Pottsgrove District purchased 1/2 acre of ground on Glasgow Road just above the stone quarry for \$150.

All teachers were required to attend the Institute during the summer for one week on their own time. However, the School Board did pay the expense of the Institute itself.

In 1885, Pottstown was still part of Pottsgrove so there were a number of schools. In 1890 the Judges of Montgomery County made the distribution of funds of Pottstown and of Pottsgrove School Districts. This was most likely due to the change in the boundary line of the borough. Upper and Lower Districts decided to share expenses of the Ringing Hill and Center School buildings at this time as well as appropriations.

Sunday School classes were held in one of the buildings. (No laws governing separation of Church and State).

Water was obtained from neighbors to the Cedar Grove and Chestnut Grove Schools.

There was no transportation at this time. In fact, there was no transportation until 1929 and then only to areas designated too far to walk. Upper Pottsgrove paid tuition to Lower Pottsgrove for students living nearer their schools to attend there. There was no high school, so Upper paid tuition to Pottstown to accept their students. In 1934, high school students were given the option of attending the Pottstown High School or the North Coventry School; however, there was only transportation to the North Coventry School. (North Coventry is now part of the Owen J. Roberts School). In 1938 the Board voted to discontinue transportation to North Coventry School, but the students could still attend the school. In 1948-49 Upper Pottsgrove School was so crowded that it sent its eighth graders as well as high school students to Pottstown. In 1952-53 Upper Pottsgrove students attended both Pottstown and Boyertown High Schools, In 1954 the high school students were sent to West Pottsgrove High School.

Some teachers still believed in "hickory sticks". In time, that changed.

A "County Dog Tax" was enforced in 1915. Upper Pottsgrove and other districts shared in these receipts.

In 1917, school was closed for 1 week due to the diphtheria epidemic.

The Board started contacting the West Chester and Kutztown Normal Schools for teacher applicants.

The Vaccination Law was enforced beginning with the 1918-19 school term, and in 1920 the Compulsory Attendance Law was enforced. School Board members were also attending Institutes at this time. A Truant Officer and a Census Taker were hired.

In 1927, the Upper Pottsgrove School Board hired an attorney to petition the County Court for the purpose of holding a special election in the district to float bonds for the erection of a new school building - \$16,000 for purchase of land and the erection of a consolidated school building. The General Election was held at the public house also known as the Halfway House.

Since the erection of the new consolidated school building, it was no longer necessary to use the Chestnut Grove or Cedar Grove School buildings, so in 1929 they were put up for auction to the highest bidder. The minutes do not say who purchased the buildings. However, the Chestnut Grove School is a private home, and the Cedar Grove School has been a Chapel for many years.

Originally, the Cedar Grove School was conveyed to the said district by deed for Seven Koly et.ux. dated August 9, 1852 recorded in Deed Book #84 Page 521, the deed being to the School District of Upper Pottsgrove Township and the Chestnut Grove School previously being conveyed by deed from Henry Davidheiser, et.ux. to the School District of Pottsgrove, dated February 21st, 1853 recorded in Deed Book N.88 Page 562 and 563 and by deed from Henry H. and Samuel Alrwin Executors, John R. Albright to Upper Pottsgrove District dated October 7th, 1898 in Deed Book #455, Page 268.

In 1936, it was agreed by the School Board that our solicitor was to offer the Annex portion of Upper Pottsgrove to the borough of Pottstown for the sum of \$6,000 cash and one year's free tuition for the pupils attending Pottstown High School in exchange for same.

In 1938, the Road Board (now known as Commissioners) began holding their meetings in the school rather than in private homes.

In 1940, in an effort to establish a way that all pupils could receive hot meals, a cook was furnished by the WPA. Parents would be asked to pay for just what the food cost, but no child should go without the hot meal even if they could not afford to pay.

Diphtheria Toxoid was administered to all students with their parents consent.

In 1941, Defense Bonds were purchased with Sinking Funds. Drinking fountains were installed.

In 1942, there was a drainage problem, so the Board decided to plug the present cesspool, install 2 new cesspools, and then run a tile drain across the front terrace to take care of any overflow.

War time was adopted.

In 1943, a site on the school grounds was offered and accepted by the Civilian Defense Council to erect an honor roll for those serving in the Armed Forces.

In 1944, teachers were requested to demand a written statement from the parents of said students who wished their child to leave the school grounds to go to a public eatery.

I.Q. Tests and Reading Tests were administered.

In 1945, the teachers visited other schools and found it a very interesting experience. Closing Exercises were held for the 8th graders who were graduating.

The Board met with the teachers to discuss general affairs such as student control on the playground, penmanship, reading, social activities, and the Safety Patrol and its duties.

In 1946, a ditto machine was purchased with candy funds. An audiometer machine was purchased for hearing tests. Subscriptions to Weekly Readers began.

A resident volunteered her services as a substitute teacher on the strength of her college degree without any teacher training. The County Superintendent who had the power to grant emergency requests, did so. The teacher was elected a substitute.

In 1947, a number of cases of pink eye and ring worm were noticed.

The principal asked the Board for a ruling on girls wearing slacks. The decision was left to the discretion of the teachers.

Tutoring was provided for a student in Graduate Hospital in Philadelphia due to a leg amputation.

A scarcity of soap was reported. They were told to "stock up".

13 students received free milk anonymously from the Mercury Relief Fund.

In 1948, there was determined a need for a permanent War Memorial to replace one made of wood. In 1954, the Memorial in front of the school was removed due to its unsightly condition as a result of a hurricane. The Board voted to replace it with a bronze plaque.

A.M. Kulp, County Superintendent of Schools, proposed a merger of 5 school districts. (Douglas, New Hanover, Fagleysville, Swamp, and Upper Frederick). It did not materialize.

The Board looked into the possibility of digging out the basement to make a cafeteria. In 1949 they approved plans for a community donated cafeteria building.

The newly planned fire company in Upper Pottsgrove was granted permission to hold their meetings in the school building and to have carnivals.

In 1950, the Parent Teacher Association sponsored Barn Dances at the school.

In 1952, the school picnic was held at Sussel Park.

1953-54, the PTA held a square dance in the fall and a festival in the spring.

In 1953, Lower, Upper & West Pottsgrove Boards met with the County Superintendent in October to discuss jointure. After a varied discussion a decision by all 3 Boards was reached on the following points:

1. The three townships would work out a plan for a 3-district consolidation.
2. The school administration would work out a thorough study on the costs of a three district venture.
3. The three districts would continue to co-operate with Pottstown on planning a program for the four districts.

The above plans would include classes for kindergarten through grade 12.

In April of 1954, a resolution was passed to agree to a jointure or merger with Lower and West Pottsgrove.

In 1953, a new well was completed (177'6", 17 gallons per minute)

In 1954, The Board was approached by a representative from Lamb's Music House with a request that the Board consider starting a school band at no cost to the school.

A secretary was hired for the school who would also take care of the book work for the cafeteria.

In 1956, the residents complained that their wells were infected through the disposal of waste products from the school cafeteria.

In 1962, the Montgomery County Civil Defense indicated that the Upper Pottsgrove School building has been selected by the Federal Government as a potential civil defense shelter.

Most of the meetings of the Upper Pottsgrove School Board during the 1960's dealt with the finances, exonerations, delinquent taxes, etc. We were in the process of reorganization.

THE FINAL MEETING OF THE UPPER POTTS GROVE SCHOOL BOARD WAS HELD JUNE 14, 1966.

If school books are of interest to you, here are some titles:

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|------|---|------|---|
| 1890 | Brooks Union Arithmetic                         | 1891 | Barnes Readers                                    |
| 1892 | Stickney Speller #1 and Word to Word #2         | 1919 | Brigham & MacFarlane Geography and Barnes History |
|      | Montgomery History and Tanbels Language Lessons |      |   |

If you think that educational publishing houses went in and out of business in a hurry, here are some interesting facts:

As far back at least as 1892, Silver Burdette, Ginn, American Book Company were supplying textbooks. At least as far back as 1920 and shortly after, J.B.Lippincott, Theodore Presser, Allyn & Bacon were supplying textbooks, and at least as far back as 1934 Randy McNally (Maps and Atlases) were in business.

I mention the above because, believe it or not, these companies are still in existence today although some of them have been bought up by other companies and are not subsidiaries.

In 1885, coal was purchased from J. Fegely and Son. That company is still in existence today, although they no longer sell coal.

In 1919, purchases were made from VanBuskirk and Bro., a store still in existence today.

In 1946, Weekly Reader subscriptions became part of the program at Pottsgrove.

Did you think that Spelling Bees, trips to museums, festivals, May Day (now called Field Day) , picnics, and dances were recent activities at schools? What happened to Marble Tournaments and Hobby Day?

As you have been reading, health concerns are not new. Hearing tests, physical examinations, vaccinations, etc. go way back.

Upper Pottsgrove School was doing the "in things" for years!

*Facts compiled from School minutes by Jean Falkenberg June & July 1990*