

Remember the Past

Scroll to bottom to see photos courtesy of Jane Schryver.

The following information was researched by the 1995 Danua Staff.

Researching the earlier history of Dansville schools has been frustrating since sources sometimes vary in terms of accuracy. In presenting this historical timeline we have done our best, with the very-appreciated help of Mr. David Gilbert, a 1977 Dansville alumnus, to create a brief overview of the progression of Dansville's education system. After researching and working on this section, we can especially appreciate the following foreword which was found in the first official Danua printed in 1926:

"It is not the aim of this volume to enumerate all the events and happenings of our story within these walls; nor is it the intention of the editors to present a flawless work of literature. Appreciate the particles of merit it may possess and justly ascribe the faults of omission and commission to the hands from which it issues.

Hence, kind reader, judge not too harshly our efforts. The presentation of this, the first volume of The Danua, is the result of our efforts to enkindle the spark of love for our Alma Mater into a flame that will glow through the ages to come..."

1798 - The first Dansville school opened. Ten to twelve students attended the private school that was conducted by Thomas Macklen, a Scotchman who is believed to have moved to the Dansville area in 1797. The school was located on the same property where the three school complex is today. (Middle school in 2011)

1799 – According to Dr. James Faulkner, who was interviewed by Mr. Bunnell on his 83rd birthday, Mr. Macklen taught in the same school the following year. Once again, there were only 10 to 12 students.

1821 - Two private schools were established within the village. District #1 was located on the corner of West Liberty Street and School Street. District #2 was located on Franklin Street. There were four other private schools in the area: School #3 was located on Hornell Road at the corner of Rt. 36 and Sandy Hill; School #4 was located on Wayland Road at the corner of Stones Falls Road; School #5 was located on East Hill; and School #6 was located in Cumminsville.

1835 - Two new schools were built within the village. District #1 was located next to the first school and District #2 was a three-story brick building on the corner of Ossian Street and Spruce Street. This building stands vacant. (This building was torn down in 2002)
On May 11th, a subscription paper (petition) was circulated for the construction of a school

building. Samuel Wilson and D. D. McNair were two of the forty-three signers.

1836 - A new school, called the Academy, was built to educate the older boys and girls. Students received instruction in advanced studies from Prof. J. Lyman Crocker (who was principal), Prof. Fuller, and Miss Niles. Some of the early pupils included: William McCurdy, John McCurdy, J. J. Welch, Hugh McCartney, Alonzo Bradner, G. R. Smith, H. A. Sprague, Calvin Fenstermacher, B. W. Woodruff and H. B. Opp. Students used the following text books in their studies: Daboll's Arithmetic. Brown's Grammar. Webster's Spelling Book, and The English Reader.

As a note of interest — Prof. J. Lyman Crocker, the first principal, was paid a salary of \$900; he wanted his salary raised to \$1,000. When the trustees declined to give him the raise, he quit.

1837 – On March 10, the school exhibition of the Dansville Academy was held in the Presbyterian Church on Main Street (the location of the library addition in 2011). The church was very crowded. During the ceremony, there was a great crashing sound that came from the cellar. Bunnell wrote, "...there came near being a fatal jam, so excited were the people. Happily, some level-headed men kept the audience seated while an investigation was being made. The crash was caused by the cracking of a big stone in the foundation. This did not endanger the building, and the exercises went on without further interruption."

1844 – St. Mary's Church purchased the original District #2 school to use as a church

1845 - The St. Mary's Church built a "proper" church and converted the "old school house" into a parochial school.

1858 - The "Old Academy on the Square" had become a district school house. In January of 1858, a seminary school was started in town under the auspices of the East Genesee Conference of the Methodist-Episcopalian Church.

1859 - Older students could now further their education. Students occupied the second story of the District #2 school as the Seminary was being built.

1860 - In January, students were able to attend the Seminary. There were 98 male students and 113 female students. Rev. Schuyler Seager was the principal. The school was officially dedicated on February 1, 1860.

1876 - St. Mary's built a new school on Franklin Street. (This building was torn down to make way for Snyder Brothers Cemetery Service)

1877 – Census figures here were rising. There were over 1,344 school-age children in all districts, but the average school attendance was only 269. Attendance in private schools was also down, due to the high cost. Leaders in the two school districts sought the help of the

county superintendent of schools, with plans to merge the two districts.

1881 - First steps were taken to merge, but there were problems. The #1 school was a "miserable, old wooden building," located on land that did not belong to the district. Citizens in the #2 district were very proud of their brick building that was located on land owned by the district.

1882 - The combined schools opened in the Old Academy Building on the square and in District #2's brick building. Citizens in District #1 were supposed to raise \$3,000 in taxes to offset the greater value of District #2's school building. It was later learned that such a tax was illegal.

1883 - On the 3rd of August a Union school meeting was held. A resolution to consolidate the two districts was adopted, and a Board of Education elected. Board members included the following prominent citizens: President Dr. G. Bastian, Frank Fielder, W. J. LaRue, James Voorhees, James H. Jackson, William Kramer, Emil C. Klauch, William Bradley, and James M. Edwards. The board met 20 times during the first year. Much of the first year was spent straightening out the tax situation.

The school board approached the Board of Trustees of the privately owned Dansville Seminary. Seminary trustees agreed to transfer the building to the district provided the remaining \$6,000 mortgage was paid off, repairs made and insurance obtained. The seminary building was officially leased in the fall of 1883. The Union School opened in December, with F. J. Diamond acting as principal, seven teachers and 287 pupils. With the seminary came the academic department which has been approved by the Regents. The first Public High School was now open; qualified students in the district could attend free. Public school no longer ended at the grade-school level.

1885 - The school was officially registered with the State Education Department and could now grant diplomas.

1886 - In December a meeting of the Union Free School District was called at the skating rink on the corner of Elizabeth and Exchange Street to decide how to accommodate the steadily increasing enrollment. Money was short—people had lost their savings when the bank failed two years prior, so thoughts were divided: should money be borrowed to pay off the mortgage and \$10,000 more for repairs of the seminary, or should the district borrow \$2,500 to buy a site and another \$25,000 to build a new school? It was decided that a new school would be built.

1887 - A lot, west of the Methodist Church on School Street, was selected as the site for the new school, but it took a long time to obtain clear title—over 20 heirs of the Faulkner estate were scattered abroad, and each had to sign the papers.

In June the contract for the building was awarded to George W. Phelps of Mount Morris at a

cost of \$21,827.21. A separate contract for \$2,350 was given to Smead & Northcott of Elmira for heating and dry closets (no more out houses!).

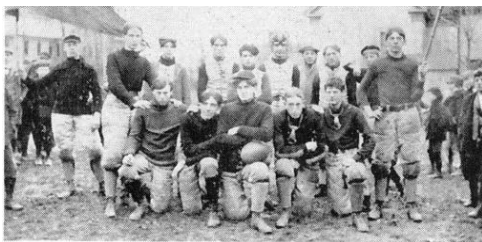
On the 13th of August the town gathered for a grand ceremony as the first cornerstone was laid. The celebration was short lived; 13 days later the First National Bank, depository for the district money, failed. Board members were among those who signed a note to pay the contractor for work that had already been done. Six weeks later there was a town meeting held to decide whether the work should continue. Dansville citizens in a show of community pride voted to float a new bond issue for \$22,000. To raise further funds the old school on the square and the brick building on Spruce and Ossian were sold at auction.

1888 - The old seminary closed its doors on the 26th of January. The new school opened four days later. The official dedication of the new school took place on the 7th of February. James M. Edwards, president, presided over the dedication. Other prominent speakers included A. O. Bunnell; State Superintendent of Public instruction A. S. Draper; Dr. Milne; and Dr. James C. Jackson. The board members during the building period were J. M. Edwards, F. Fielder, F. M. Perine, J. J. Bailey, F. F. Dyer, F. W. Noyes, Albert Sweet, William Kramer, and W. H. Dick.

The new era of a free and modern school system had begun.

1890 - The first class graduated from the Union School. Dansville residents were proud of their school and the first graduates, despite the higher taxes that were being paid. The following graduates were listed in Bunnell's: Max Sweet, Jessie M. Oxborn, Emma L. Tenney, Carrie E. Stone, Lillie S. Brayton, Ed. T. Fairchild, Vira Karcher and Helen Edwards.

1898 - On October 29th more than 750 people attended the first high school football game, Dansville vs. Hornell. The game finished with a 5-5 tie. Seven games were played, with only two games lost during the first year.



1899 - This team photo is the earliest photo of a Dansville High School Football team that we could locate.

1900 - On the 12th of September school-children sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America" at the town's dedication of the Dansville Soldiers' monument. On Thursday, November 22 the Dansville High School Literary Club was organized, with 25 charter members. The 1st issue of the monthly high school periodical, Dansville High School Mirror, was published in March. Fred E. Clark was the editor, and Nicholas H. Noyes was the business

manager. 500 copies were printed at the Dansville Breeze.

1902 - The April, May, and June issues of the Dansville High School Mirror were combined in a yearbook. Bunnell wrote that this "was deemed so creditable by the board of education that several hundred extra copies were issued in place of the usual annual catalogue. The style and general construction of this journal combined with its able management reflects credit on the school as those in direct charge of the publication." Despite the high praise offered, the Mirror staff made a plea to its subscribers to please pay for their subscription and wrote the following message to the editors who would be taking over: "It is unnecessary to bore our readers again with the ill success which the attempts to create a literary enthusiasm in the school have met. Be it enough to say that despite the discouraging circumstances which have attended the Mirror's career, the present management and editorial board retire with the sincere hope that, whoever the next board are, they may meet with a more encouraging response to their attempts."

While members of the Mirror staff may have been frustrated by the lack of interest shown in their area, apparently students were very active when it came to athletic endeavors, despite the lack of a gymnasium. The first track team was organized under the leadership of Mr. Knappenberg, the captain, and Mr. Reynell, the manager. Two meets were held, one in the fall, and another in the spring. During the winter the Athletic Association was organized to help raise funds for the track and baseball teams. Mr. Noyes also organized the High School Athletic League in April. Principals and representatives from Corning, Haverling, Wellsville, Belmont, Dansville, and Hornellsville High Schools met at Hornellsville to draw up a constitution for the league. Now, if athletes wanted to participate in league games, they had to take at least two subjects in school and be in attendance at least 75% of the time.

While the high school was free to residents of Dansville, nonresidents were charged a \$1,000 tuition. Almost 25% of the students who attended paid tuition. Attendance was gaining and the graduating class size more than doubled in two years.

1912 - A Senior Annual was published.

The following school cheer served as the opening to the book:

One-a-zippa, two-a-zippa Three-a- zippa zam

We go to Dansville High

We don't give a ————

Hobble gobble, razzel dazzel, Sis boom bah Dansville High School, rah, rah, rah

Booma-lacka, Booma-lacka Bow, wow, wow Chicka-lacka, chicka-lacka

Chow, chow, chow Booma-lacka, Chicka-lacka

Who says Yes?

We're for the boys of D. H. S.

Brecka, co-ex, co-ex, co ex, Brecka, co-ex, co-ex, co-ex, Kaboo, Kaboo, Hullaboo Dansville, Dansville, Dansville!

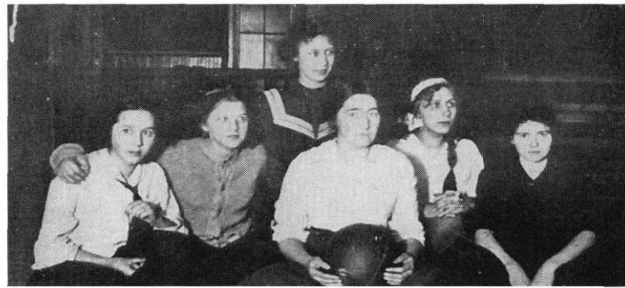
The town voted to build a newer and larger school. The students described the town vote as follows:

"Had one happened to be in the vicinity of the Dansville High School on the evening of May 7, 1912, he would have seen a large throng of people, all wending their way in the direction of the school edifice. Following the crowd, we would have been confronted, as he approached the school, by groups of little boys and girls, bearing large banners inscribed with the football legend, "VOTE FOR US." For the people of Dansville were deciding whether or not our beautiful village to take its place in the foremost ranks of progress as regards educational facilities. As the evening progressed such a concourse of Dansville's citizens assembled that it became necessary to adjourn the meeting to a larger quarters. And so, escorted by the two legions of "VOTE FOR US" boys and girls, the people crossed the park to the Heckman Opera House. Almost immediately the motion [was put to raise by taxation the sum of \$32,000.00 for enlarging and modernizing our present building. After the ballots had been counted, it was found that the forces of progress and education had triumphed by a large majority. That night the school bell rang as it had never rung before; for history had been made—history that meant that the citizens of Dansville were ever to be found lined up on the side of the school Progress and Advance and that the D.H.S. of the future was to be a Newer and Larger D.H.S.

The class of 1912, representing the sentiment of every student in school, from the first grade to the chapel, wish to express the happiness felt by all in the enlargement of our present privileges and opportunities, and to assure the citizens of Dansville that in the heart of every student there is nothing but sincerest gratitude for what our good townspeople, our worthy Board of Education and our excellent Faculty have done for us in this matter."



This photo was included with the 1912 above.

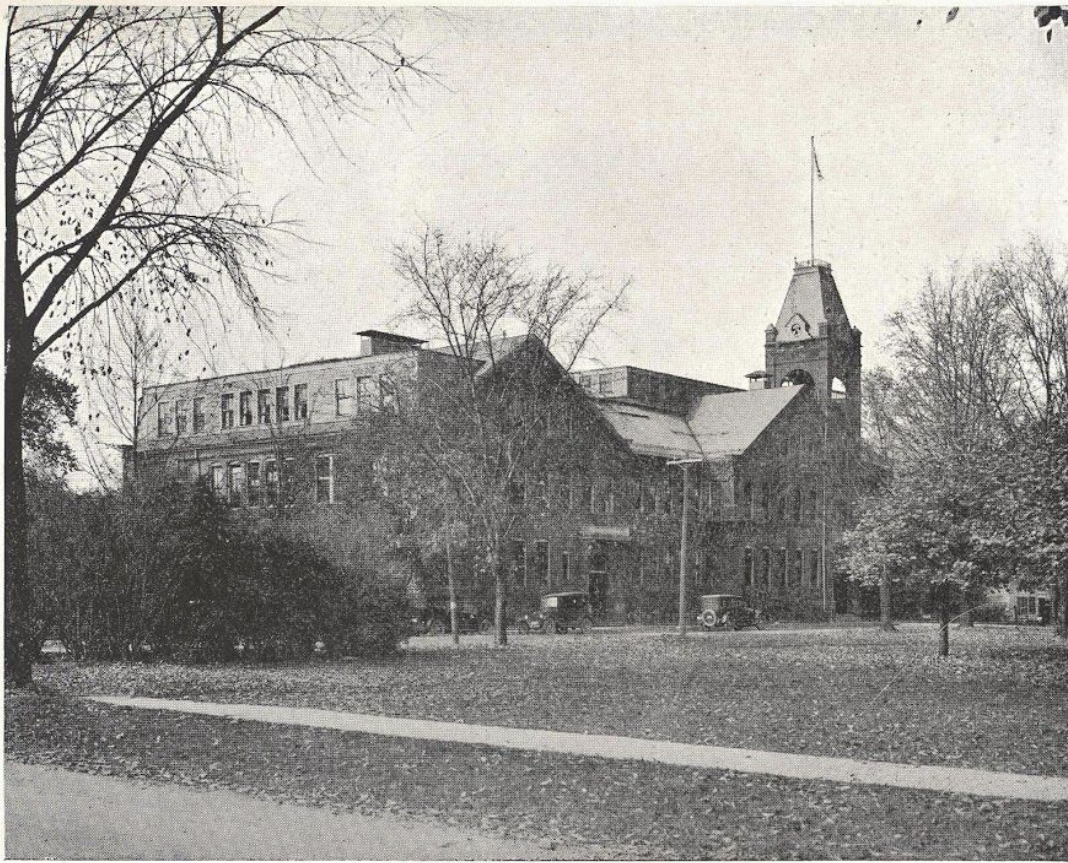


The 1912 Senior Annual also featured a photo article printed of the girls' basketball team

School colors were red and black.

The Senior Class pride was evident in the last lines of the Senior history written by Ruth B. Lowrey, "We know not what the future holds for us, but when we are well on life's road it will be good to remember the golden days when we were happy together, the class of 1912."

Notes of interest: The Junior High became a separate department, and the Commercial Department was added.



Alma Mater

*Nestled in our quiet valley
'Twixt the hills serene,
Proudly stands our Alma Mater
Clad in ivy green.
Far below the busy traffic
Of the bustling cars,
Peers she upward toward the heavens
And the twinkling stars.*

*At thy feet, our glorious High School,
We our garlands strew;
Thou art our beloved mother,
We'll to thee be true.
Fondly will we do thy bidding
While we present are,
And when alumni days are speeding
Sound thy praises far.*

Chorus

*Raise the chorus—speed it onward—
Loud our praises sing;
'Tis of thee, our Alma Mater,
D. H. S., we sing.*

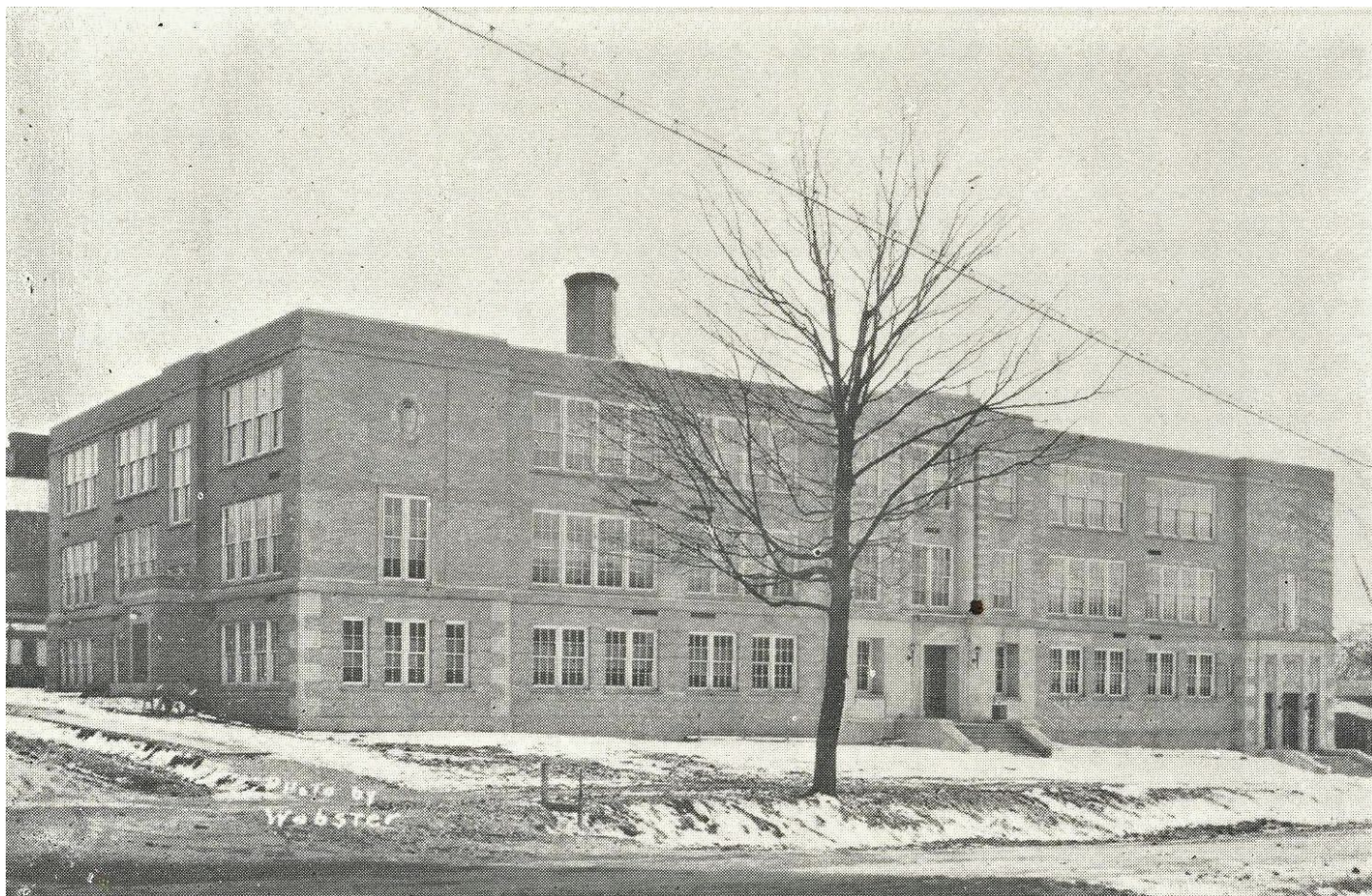


DEDICATED
TO
PRINCIPAL RALPH W. CLEMENTS
Senior Member of the Faculty

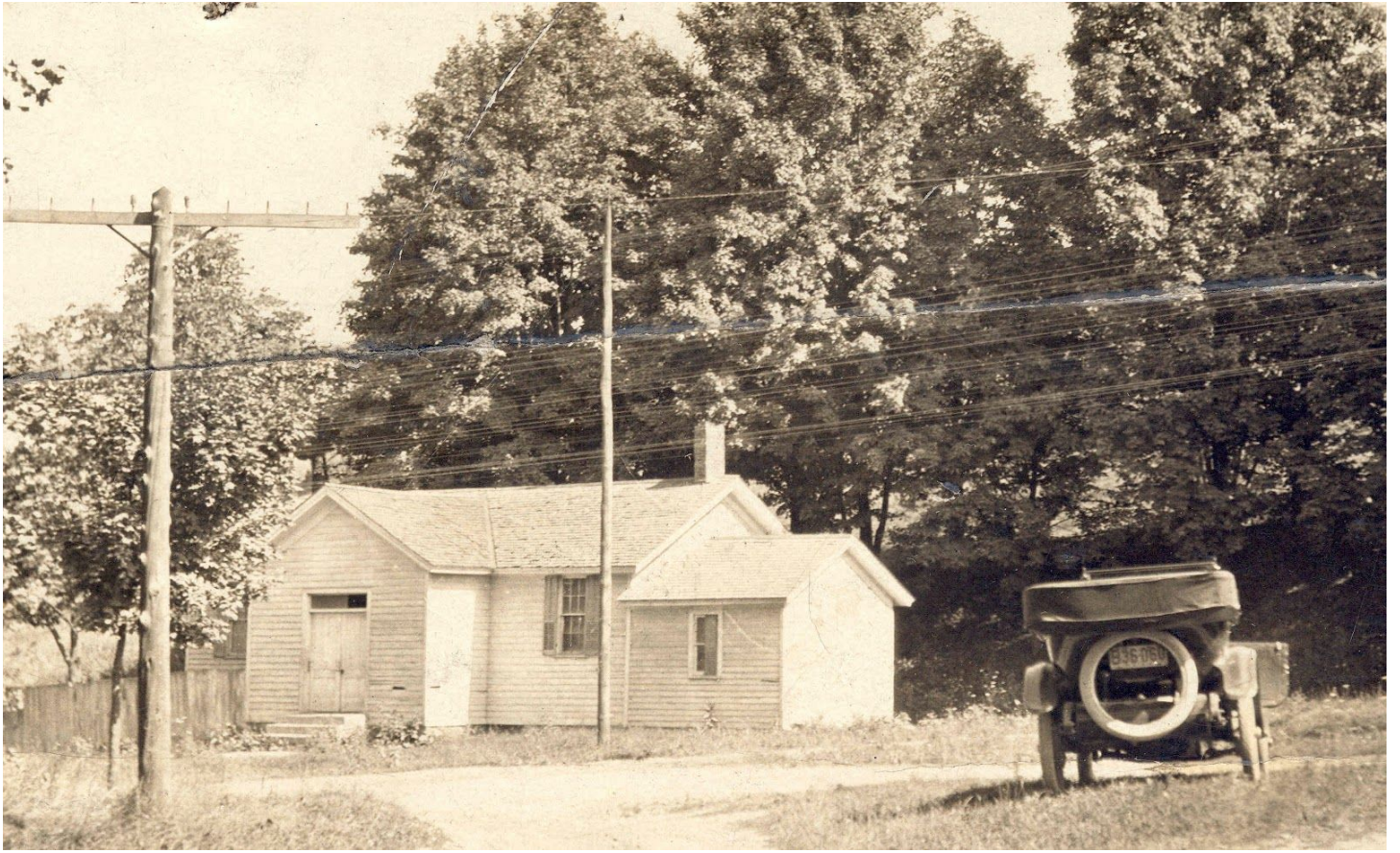
Who
for sixteen years has watched over,
advised and guided the youth of our
Alma Mater in the difficulties which
beset their school life--to whom we,
in particular, owe so much and are
indebted for assistance and inter-
est in all activities,

We,
The Class of June 1926,
dedicate this our annual
THE DANUA

1926 Ralph Clements



1930 High School



White Schoolhouse - Foot of Wayland Hill



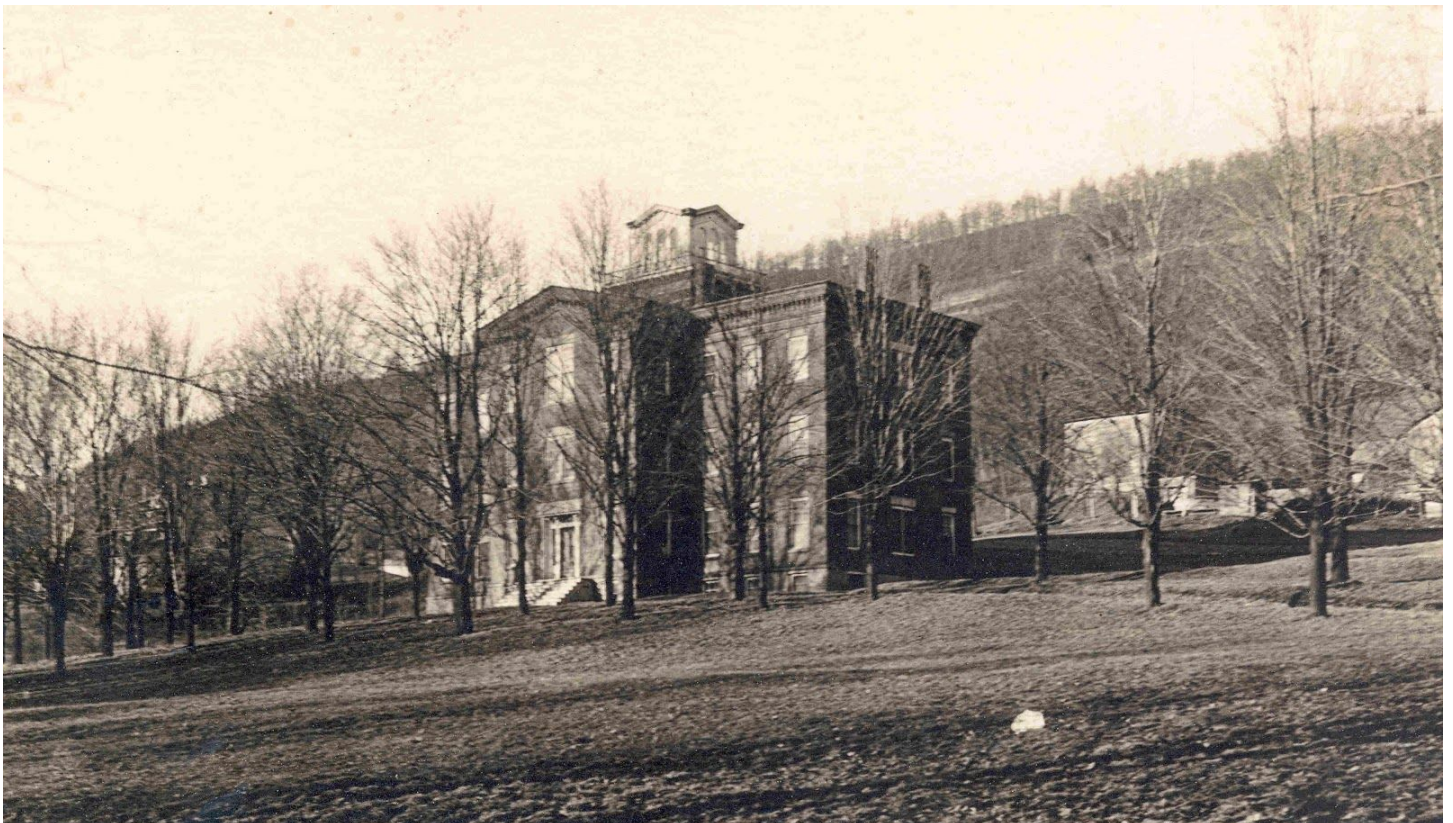
Union School



Union High School



St. Patrick's School and Convent



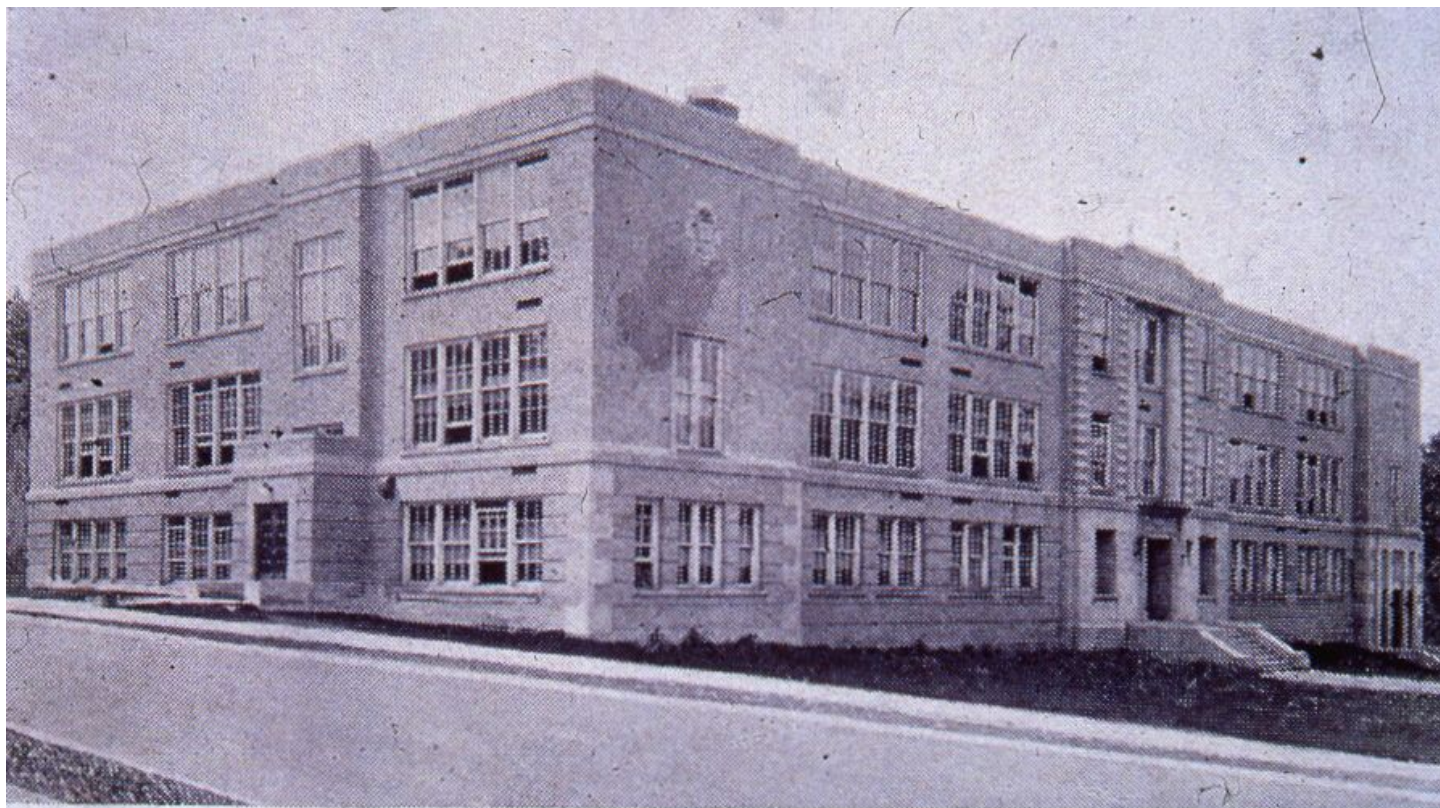
Seminary - King's Daughter's Home



Rogersville School, South Dansville



Ossian Street Schoolhouse - Readshaw Mills

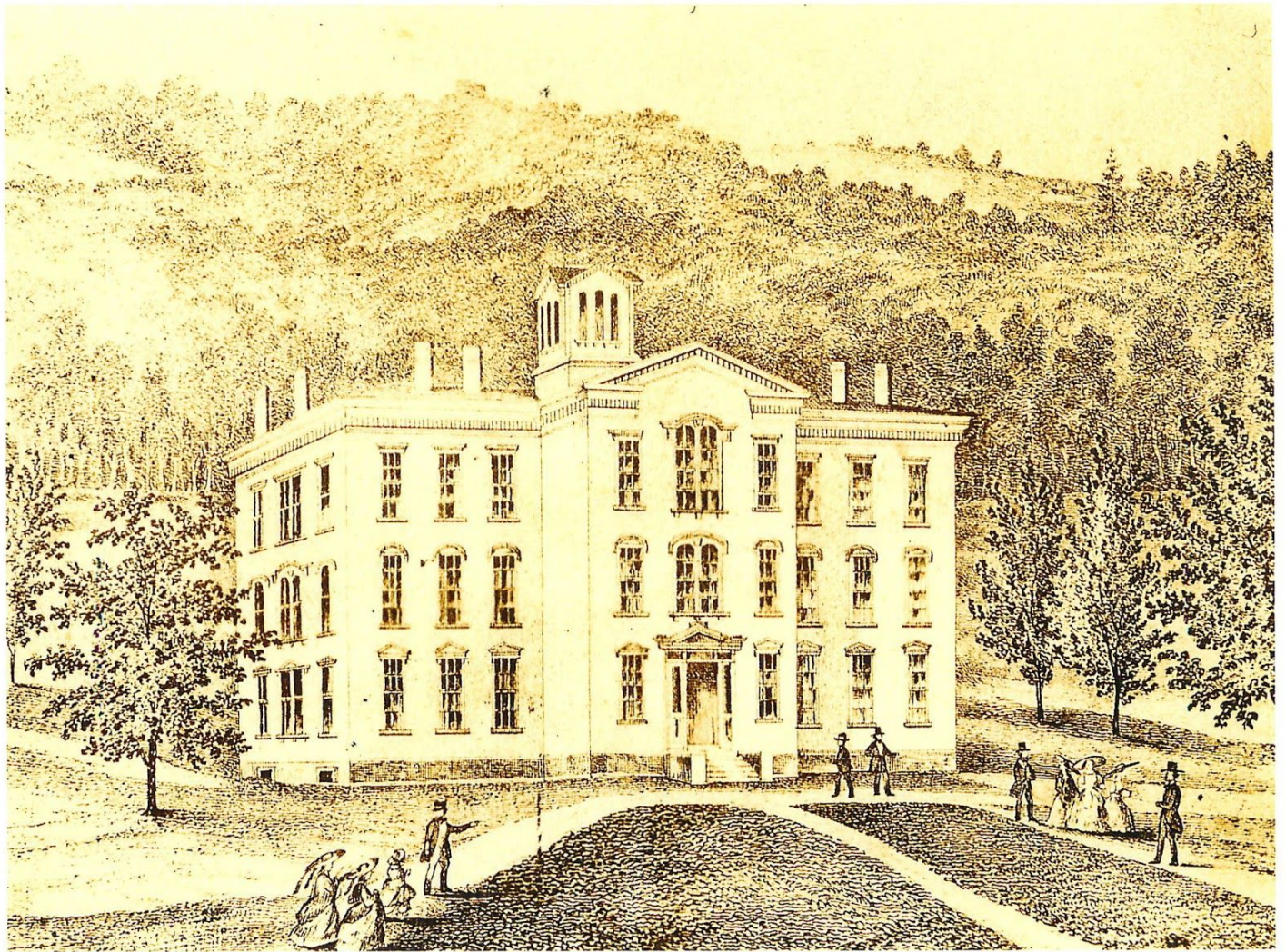


**This Costly Modern Building Has Housed the Dansville
High School Since 1928**

Dansville High School, 1928



1902 Poags Hole School



1859 Seminary from Carte de Viste

