

# The History of Chesterton High School

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and

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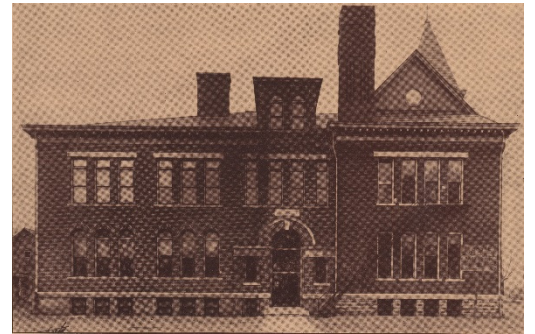
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## School Corporation

From the first local public school in 1852 to the mid-1900s, township governments organized and financed public schools. For many years Jackson, Liberty and Westchester Townships each had separate school systems and separate high schools. In 1968, in accordance with a new state law, voters moved to consolidate the separate school systems, thus creating the modern Duneland School Corporation.<sup>1</sup> The birth of the DSC meant that all high school students in Jackson, Liberty, and Pine Townships would henceforth attend Chesterton High School in Westchester Township.

## High School Buildings

Throughout Chesterton's early years, from the mid- to late-1800s, education was not compulsory. This meant that some children did not finish grade school, and even fewer went on to high school or a university. The first official high school class, which graduated in 1890, consisted of only two students (Hanna Whitcomb and May Wibert) who completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>2</sup> In 1899, after being commissioned by the state, the school went to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and had three graduates (John E. Gelow, Jay Shanks, and Elsie Diddie). During this period, the high school was housed in a single room on the second floor of the grade school, located at Indiana Ave. and 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Due to major damages caused by a fire in 1911, the high school's space within the grade school was improved upon dramatically, although it still did not operate within its own building.<sup>3</sup>



Chesterton School, Indiana Ave. and 2nd St., c. 1917

That changed in 1924, when a new high school building was constructed at Sixth and Morgan Avenue and housed grades 7-12. In the 1950s and 1960s three additions were made to provide the space and facilities for the growing population. In 1970, the original building was torn down to make room for a new auditorium, swimming pool, and classrooms.<sup>4</sup> The current Chesterton Middle School operates on the land where the original high school stood.<sup>5</sup>



Chesterton High School on Morgan Ave., 1924

As Chesterton's population continued to boom in the 1980s and 1990s, it became clear that the current facilities no longer met the community's needs. Thus, in 1996, voters approved the construction of a new high school, while the old CHS at Sixth and Morgan Ave. would be converted into the new Chesterton Middle School.<sup>6</sup> On August 21, 2000, classes began at the new Chesterton High School, now located on 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Liberty Township.<sup>7</sup>

## Education and Activities

The first seeds of secondary education in Chesterton came in the form of occasional upper-level courses (such as algebra or Latin) offered by the principal of the local grade school.<sup>8</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the high school was much more organized, adding such courses as English, agricultural studies, and domestic science.<sup>9</sup> Later, the curriculum was expanded to include music, drawing, and manual training.<sup>10</sup> Graduation ceremonies were first held in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, but they moved to the new high school's auditorium in 1924.<sup>11</sup>



CHS Freshman Class 1921-22

In addition to academics, CHS offered several extracurricular activities. High school students performed operettas and plays in local halls until the auditorium allowed performances at the high school building.<sup>12</sup> The first high school yearbook was called *The Echo*. The Great Depression and WWII put a halt to annual yearbooks, but in 1946, the high school produced its first yearbook since the Great Depression, titled *Singing Sands*.<sup>13</sup> In 1971, the

school launched a Speech and Debate

program that went on to become very successful on both the state and national level. In 1976, the high school's radio station, 88.3 FM WDSO, began its first year of broadcasting.<sup>14</sup>

CHS has a long and distinguished history in athletics, as well. In 1923, CHS held its first county basketball competition and



CHS Girls' Basketball Team, 1929

won the tournament by defeating Valparaiso. By 1928 there was even a girls' basketball team. Chesterton played all of their early basketball games at home because no other high school in Porter County had a modern gym. About the same time, maroon and gold became the official school colors.<sup>15</sup> The high school's football team was successful for many years, including a state championship in 1940.<sup>16</sup> Under head coach Ray Banary, the Trojans won more than 100 games during his 15-year tenure in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>17</sup> At first, CHS was a member of the Calumet Conference, participating from 1963-1969.<sup>18</sup> In 1970, Chesterton became a founding member of the Duneland Athletic Conference, along

with Hobart, Portage, and Valparaiso.



CHS Boys' Basketball Team, 1931

## The Teachers and Administrators

Throughout its history, Chesterton High School has benefitted from strong leadership, both in the classrooms and in the administration. One of the most influential educators in Duneland history was F.M. Goldsborough, whose name now graces the Chesterton Middle School gymnasium. Goldsborough taught for 59 years, 50 of which were spent in Chesterton. He was principal of the high school for 30 years, from 1910-1941. A true believer in the power of Chesterton's education system, Goldsborough died in 1954 at the age of 77 while teaching an advanced algebra class.<sup>19</sup>



Although the high school had a band for many years, the modern competitive marching band got its big start in 1973 with the arrival of music director Al Castronovo. Mr. Castronovo taught first in Liberty Township from 1959-1967. He came to Duneland Schools in 1973 and directed the CHS Trojan Guard from 1973-1984.<sup>20</sup> Dedicated to music and the success of his band members, Mr. Castronovo led the Trojan Guard to four state championships by 1981. In 1979, the band went to Florida to represent Indiana in the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of States.<sup>21</sup> They also played at the Presidential Inauguration in January

1981.<sup>22</sup> The following school year, the band won a national championship, played in the Orange Bowl parade, and were honored by the Indiana House of Representatives.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Castronovo left CHS in 1984 to serve as director of the Festival of States in Florida.<sup>24</sup> He died in 1986 in Indianapolis from injuries suffered in a car crash.<sup>25</sup>

CHS Band, 1944

<sup>1</sup> Vicki Urbanik, "History of Chesterton High School," *Chesterton Tribune*.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Greene, "History of Chesterton High School," *The Graduate* (1915): 6.

<sup>3</sup> Urbanik.

<sup>4</sup> Duneland School Corporation, "Auditorium Dedication: Chesterton High School," May 12, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Urbanik.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Greene.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Nelson, "The Growth of the Schools of Westchester Township", 1916.

<sup>11</sup> Russell Lee, "The Public School in Chesterton in Later Years Called the Thomas School, The Buildings," (church archives, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Duneland School Corporation.

<sup>13</sup> Frances Ely and Juliet Morgan, "Remember When at CHS," *Chesterton Tribune*, 6/6/1957.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Waters, "Alumni," *WDSO*, accessed 08/15/2014. <http://duneland.schoolwires.net/Page/697>

<sup>15</sup> Ely and Morgan.

<sup>16</sup> Ely and Morgan.

<sup>17</sup> Tom S., "Chesterton High School Varsity Football History," *Chesterton High School Trojan Football*, accessed 08/05/2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/chestertonvarsityfootball/>

<sup>18</sup> Tom S.

<sup>19</sup> Eva Hopkins, "FM Goldsborough," *Find A Grave*, published 04/01/2011, accessed 08/15/2014, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=67768300>

<sup>20</sup> "Injuries Claim Al Castronovo's Life," *Chesterton Tribune*, 6/16/1986.

<sup>21</sup> John Canright, "Trojan Guard Wins Fourth State Title," *Chesterton Tribune*, 11/2/1981.

<sup>22</sup> ----, "Trojan Guard in Inaugural Parade," *Chesterton Tribune*, 12/9/1980.

<sup>23</sup> ----, "Trojan Guard Wins National Championship," *Chesterton Tribune*, 11/9/1981; "Trojan Guard Wins Orange Bowl Competition," *Chesterton Tribune*, 12/30/1981; "Lawmakers Honor Trojan Guard," *Chesterton Tribune*, 1/5/1982.

<sup>24</sup> Dana Priest, "Strike Up the Bands," *St. Petersburg Times*, 1984.

<sup>25</sup> "Injuries Claim Al Castronovo's Life."