

Carroll County Times “Carroll’s Yesteryears” Articles

Manchester School Dedication

Carroll County Times article for 10 June 1990

By Joe Getty, Executive Director, Historical Society of Carroll County

With the dedication of the new elementary school in Manchester this afternoon, a new phase in a long and varied history of education will begin in that community.

The educational history of Manchester follows a pattern representative of many communities in this region. The typical evolution of educational facilities began with a log schoolhouse built by a local church or by a board of trustees incorporated through the General Assembly. The second phase occurred during the mid-19th century and was generally marked by improvement of the schoolhouse and administration by a school district board of trustees. Each Carroll County election district had several school districts which had their own independent board of trustees.

The third phase began in 1865 when the state government mandated formation of a county school board. Carroll County protested this development, but the county school board was established and slowly assumed control over and provided substantial improvements to the schoolhouses previously administered by the individual districts.

The early 20th century brought consolidation of school facilities with the construction of high schools in each town. The mid-20th century saw another consolidation organized around regional high schools. The most recent phase has involved the rapid construction of elementary schools to provide for the extensive growth of the county over the last decade.

Education in Manchester follows this pattern quite well. Manchester was located along a major 19th century turnpike and the town’s prosperity equaled that of Westminster and Taneytown during the early 19th century. In fact, Manchester attracted one of the first colleges in Carroll County with the establishment of Irving College in 1858. The success of this institution was disrupted by the Civil War and Manchester saw a lessening of its prominence in the county after it was bypassed by the railroads during the late 19th century.

The first school in Manchester was established by the German Church, which was a union congregation of the Lutheran and Reformed denominations. Pastor Harvey G. Schlichter records in *Two Centuries of Grace and Growth in Manchester 1760-1960*, that the church records of September 17, 1762 include a statement of purpose for creating a school and a list of subscribers who contributed funds to construct a schoolhouse. The school’s rules of 1820 indicate that the lessons were to be taught in German and English, but that German was to have precedence because the school was sponsored by a German congregation.

A new phase of education in Manchester occurred in 1829 when a board of trustees received a charter from the Maryland General Assembly for the incorporation of the Manchester United Academy. The trustees included many prominent men of the community and one of them, George Motter, donated a parcel of land for the location of the academy’s schoolhouse. A log and stone structure with a stuccoed exterior was built in 1831. This land is part of the elementary school property today.

© Historical Society of Carroll County

www.hsccmd.com - (410) 848-6494 - 210 East Main Street, Westminster MD 21157

Carroll County Times “Carroll’s Yesteryears” Articles

The academy was a private enterprise managed by the school trustees, although it did receive approximately \$200 a year from the state to support its educational programs. The students paid their own tuition at rates between \$2 to \$5 per quarter. The trustees interviewed and hired the teachers for the school. The academy’s principal was paid \$300 a year. The academy continued as the primary educational institution in Manchester until the Civil War.

With the creation of the county school board in 1865, the educational system in Manchester became public. In 1878, a new four-room brick schoolhouse was constructed. In the vertical files of the Historical Society of Carroll County is a paper on the history of Manchester schools written in the 1970s by Charles and Edna Reck. This paper includes a reference to the annual State Report of the Carroll County Public Schools for 1878 about the new Manchester school:

“At Manchester, the second village in size in the county, a new schoolhouse, to contain four spacious rooms for the accommodation of a graded school – one department of which is to be appropriated to the use of a Grammar School – is now being built of brick, on a beautiful site, and when completed it will be an ornament to that place. This is the building for which measures were adopted last year, but which could not then proceed because the necessary funds were not provided, and the building which now curtails the funds so much that nothing can be added to the very small salaries paid to our teachers. This building is estimated to cost, when finished, about the sum of \$4,000. It can scarcely be less, and it may cost a little more.”

The Recks also record in their history that two brick outhouses were built in 1878 for the sum of \$27.33 and that these served as the school lavatories until 1932.

During the 1920s, the program of education was upgraded to provide an accredited high school. An active volunteer and former president of the Historical Society, Gerald Richter, was principle at Manchester from 1929 to 1945. When he first arrived in Manchester, the high school was housed at the old log and stone academy building with two portables at the rear of it. The lower grades were in the brick schoolhouse that had two double-portables adjoining it. Mr. Richter will be providing reminiscences of his years in Manchester at the elementary school dedication today.

The goal of the county school board in the 1920-30s was to consolidate the schools in central facilities and eliminate the need for the scattered one-room schoolhouses. This was accomplished in Manchester with the construction of the new high school that housed all grades in 1932. The old academy building and the brick schoolhouse were demolished for the two-story brick building with a full basement constructed at the cost of \$65,000.

The new school's dedication was held on Labor Day, September 5, 1932. It was a joint event for the Manchester community to commemorate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth as well as to dedicate the high school. Festivities began with a parade of floats, historical groups, bands, drum corps, fire companies, politicians and distinguished guests along Main Street and proceeding to the school on York Street.

The main presentation at the dedication was an address by Dr. Paul E. Titsworth, president of Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland. J. Pearre Wantz, president of the Carroll County Board of

Carroll County Times “Carroll’s Yesteryears” Articles

Education, made the presentation of the building to the community and an acceptance speech was made by the school's principle, Professor Richter.

The growth of the student population during the mid-20th century was accommodated by additions to the high school building and the development of regional high schools. In 1949, a wing was added to the high school for housing the primary grades. An auditorium-gymnasium and cafeteria was added in 1953.

In 1956, North Carroll Senior High School was built in Greenmount to serve grades nine through twelve and relieve the overcrowded schools in Manchester and Hampstead. A wing was added to North Carroll in 1962 as a junior high school and the building in Manchester became an elementary school housing kindergarten through grade six. The Greenmount facility became a middle school when the new North Carroll High School was built in Hampstead in 1976.

Today’s dedication marks another milestone in the history of education in Manchester. The 1932 high school was torn down, and the 1949 and 1953 additions were extensively renovated as part of the architectural designs for the new facility. The elementary school is the fourth major building on the same site in use since 1831 for educational facilities. Moreover, it continues a community tradition that began in 1762 for the education of Manchester’s young people.

No photo available.

Photo Caption: Manchester students and their teacher (far right) pose for a school portrait in this turn-of-the-century photograph. They are standing in front of the old Manchester Academy building on York Street which stood on part of the parcel where the new Manchester Elementary School is being dedicated today. Photo courtesy of Joe Getty.