

EDUCATION IN THE BRIGHTON AREA POST 1900

By the late 1920s it became necessary to consider the construction of another building in which to educate the children of the area, which now included high school pupils from outlying districts. The story is told that a dispute arose as to the location of this school. To settle the argument, Thomas S. Leith, school board Trustee and later Mayor of Brighton, donated the land for the school. Construction cost of the brick, two story building was \$140,000. In 1928, this school, 125 S. Church Street, opened its doors with grades K-4 on the first level and grades 5-12 upstairs.

In the first graduating class at the 'new' school, 1929, thirteen received their diplomas. This class was the first to take a Senior trip; to Washington, D.C. By 1931, the number had increased to 20. Then the Great Depression shut down the country. The closing of the banks by President Roosevelt, and subsequent freezing of all funds, forced the school board to dismiss classes for the year on April 21, 1933, almost six weeks early.

The old Union School was commonly the scene of teen dances during the 1930s and 40s. By 1947 it was used by St. Patrick's Catholic Church as a parochial school. The building was razed August 12, 1957.

Following WW II, the advent of better highways allowed many families to move to the area. The land, which for 100 years has grown grains and pasture, now had crops of new homes and families. With the ensuing baby boom, the population of school age children rose in the surrounding townships. The one room elementary school districts in the townships found it increasingly difficult to keep up. A high school diploma quickly became the accepted norm. The charge for tuition for children to attend high school in town was not sufficient to cover the cost of the new facilities which became necessary to handle the increased number of pupils who wished to attend. This, understandably, did not sit too well with city taxpayers. It was not a reasonable decision to build a high school in each township, so the wisest alternative seemed to be consolidation with the district which had the building available and the shouldering of increased school taxes. Not all districts were enthusiastic about the idea. Occasionally one can still be aware of ill feelings engendered almost 40 years ago.

Space needs forced the reopening of the 'Little' school on Rickett Road and the remodeling and enlarging of the 1928 school in 1950 and again in 1957 and 1970. Now called the Robert S. Scranton Middle School it is named for its long time teacher and principal. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair. To be continued.)

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