

**A STORY OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OF
BURLINGTON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

**INCLUDING ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS
AND AGENCIES**

**A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND
PICTORAL REVIEW**

With a Forward by
DR. LOUIS J. KASER
County Superintendent

Excerpted article on Delanco Township Schools
contributed to Delanco Historic Preservation Board
By Dr. Jay Cohen

Delanco Township

Little is known of the history of educational matters in Delanco prior to the year 1856. Until that year Delanco was a part of Willingboro Township and the children of the early residents of this town were obligated to walk the entire distance between their homes and the Willingboro School. However, in the year 1856, it was thought that the population in this section had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of a school of its own. Therefore, a one-room building, size 24x24 feet, was built on Buttonwood Street.

It was thought at the time that this school would be adequate for a number of years, but it was used in its original form only until 1862. This was three years after the separation of Beverly Township (of which Delanco was then a part) from Willingboro Township.

At a meeting of the inhabitants of the newly formed township of Beverly on March 8, 1859, Mr. Abel H. Nichols was named school superintendent of the district. There were no county superintend-

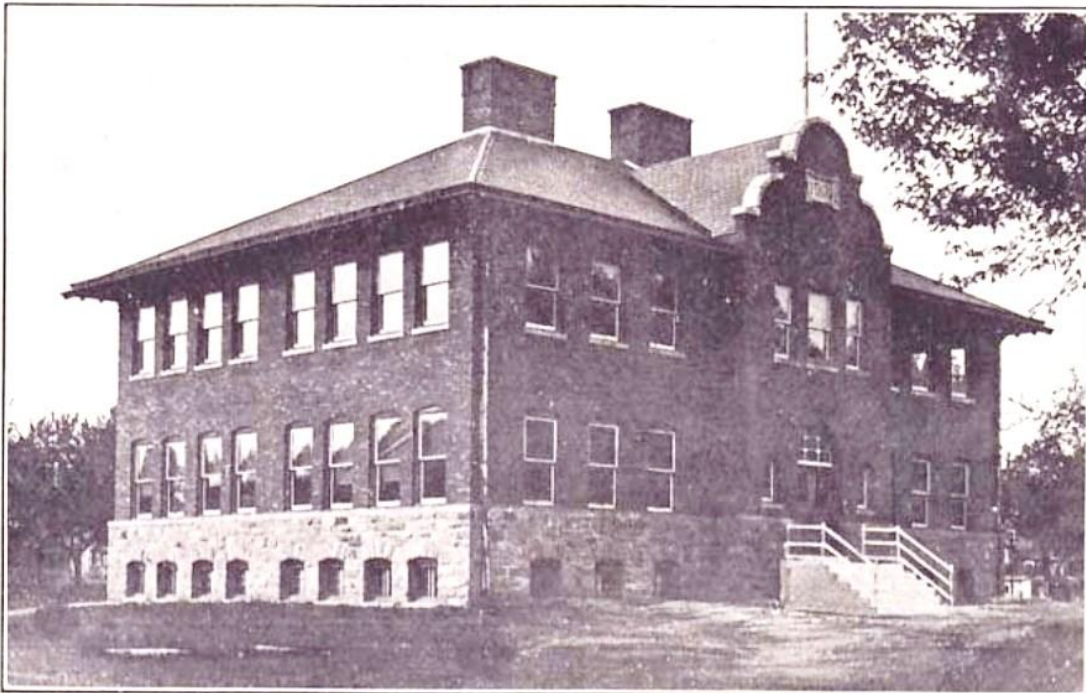
dents in those days and district superintendents served.

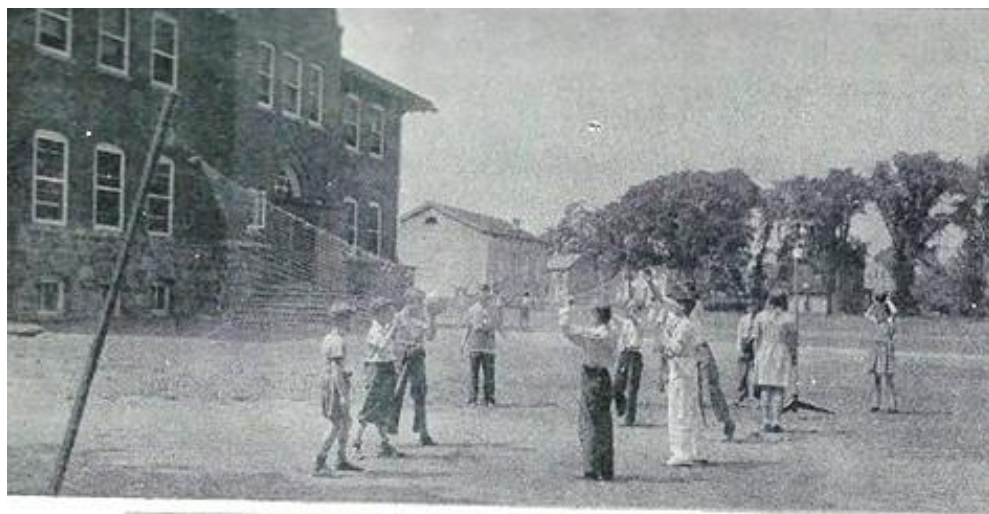
It is interesting to note from the annual statement of Mr. Nichols that in the year 1860 school was open for an average of seven months. The average attendance that year was 170. The number of pupils enrolled at all times during the year was 288 but the number of children of lawful school age in the township was 549.

It was in 1862 that it was found necessary to add another room of the same size as the original one to the school building. The entrance of the building was changed to the Vine Street side. A vestibule was built between the two classrooms.

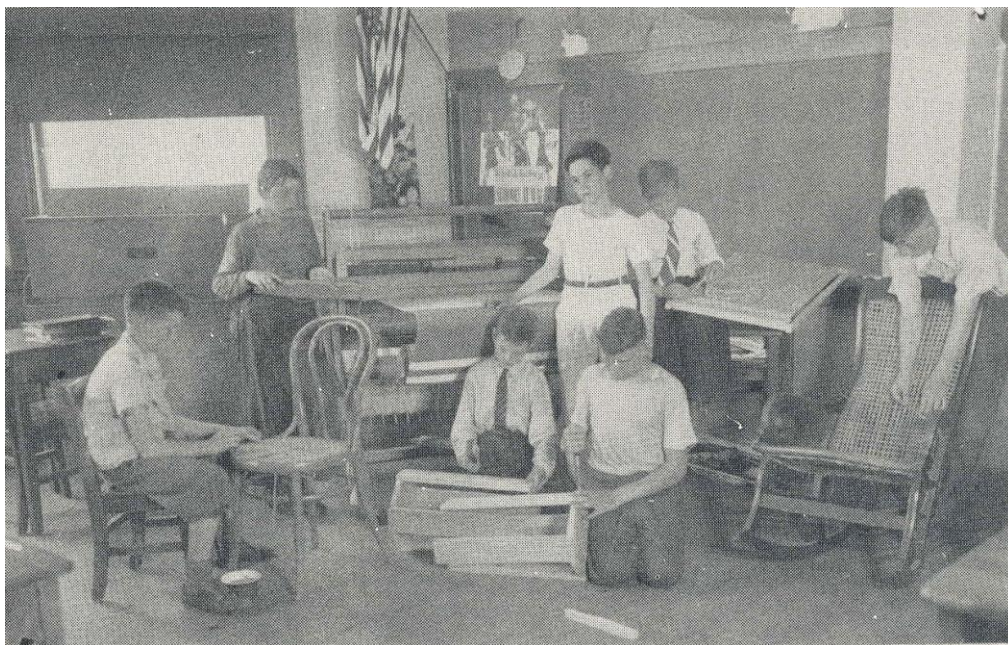
Almost thirty years passed before the school building had to be changed again, although during those years the small children were taught at times in the library building next door to the school. The library building had been erected in 1865, following the founding of the Library Association in 1864.

Hickory Street School



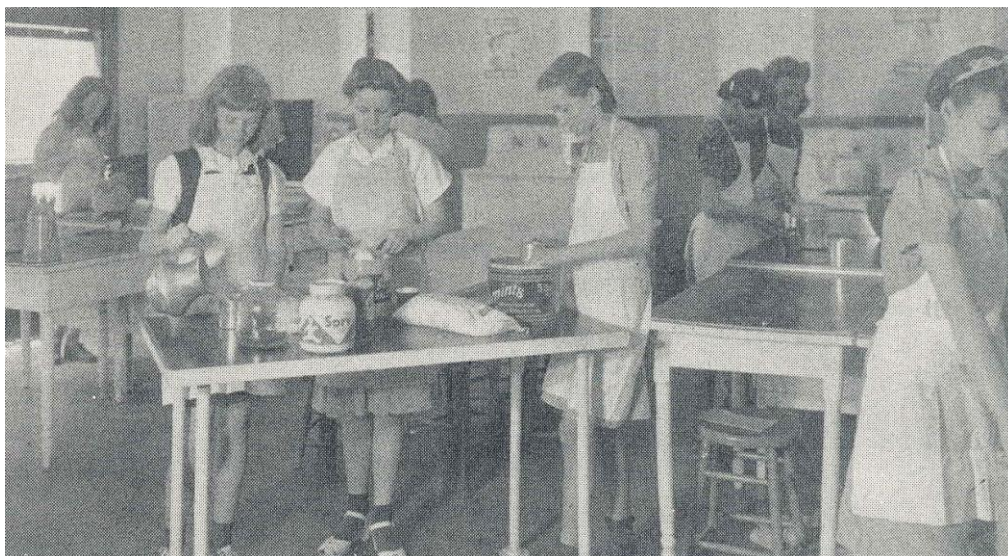
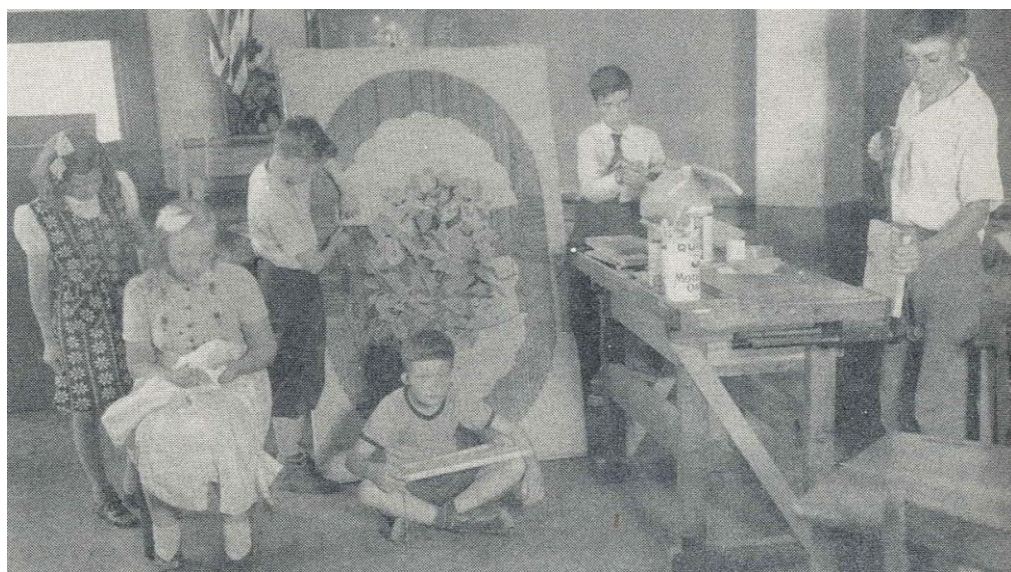


Top—Playing Volley Ball and Goal-Hi During Physical Education
Center—Shop Work in Delanco
Lower—Rehearsed for Commencement, "A Pan-American Play"



Special Class Activities
Chair Caning, Weaving
on a Loom

Special Class Showing
Variety of Activities



Making Ice Cream
and Cookies in
Domestic Science

While in this building the children are said to have used boxes for seats and chairs for desks.

Still later it was found that a second addition to the school was necessary. A third room was added and the entrance was changed back to the Buttonwood Street side of the building. A hall was added between the two original rooms and the new one. This building still stands and is known as the A. A. Building.

At the time the second addition was made to the school, another major issue confronted the people. It had been proposed that the board of education supply all of the necessary books for the use of the children. There was quite a controversy, but the result was that the board of education did furnish the books.

At the turn of the century, it was found that the school accommodations were again unsuited to the number of pupils attending school. In 1902, a two-story brick building was erected on Hickory Street. It contained eight classrooms with a seating capacity of 284. In addition to the classrooms were a principal's office and a teachers' rest room. This building was adequate until the early 1920s when it again became necessary to remove three classrooms to the A.A. Building.

On February 21, 1917, after an earlier meeting in January of the same year, the Delanco Parent Teacher Association was organized under the leadership of Miss Lila Branson, principal of the school. Many worthwhile projects have been sponsored by the PTA. Child study groups were organized under Miss Branson's leadership and are still in operation. Free milk and luncheons to undernourished children were given on a large scale during 1931 and 1932, and this work is still continued in part where it is necessary. The PTA has also contributed financially toward many of the trips taken by the children. The Summer Round Up of pre-school children is made annually. This has resulted in considerable improvement in the general health of the children in the lower grades.

On October 29, 1923, at a meeting of the board of education a motion was made to purchase

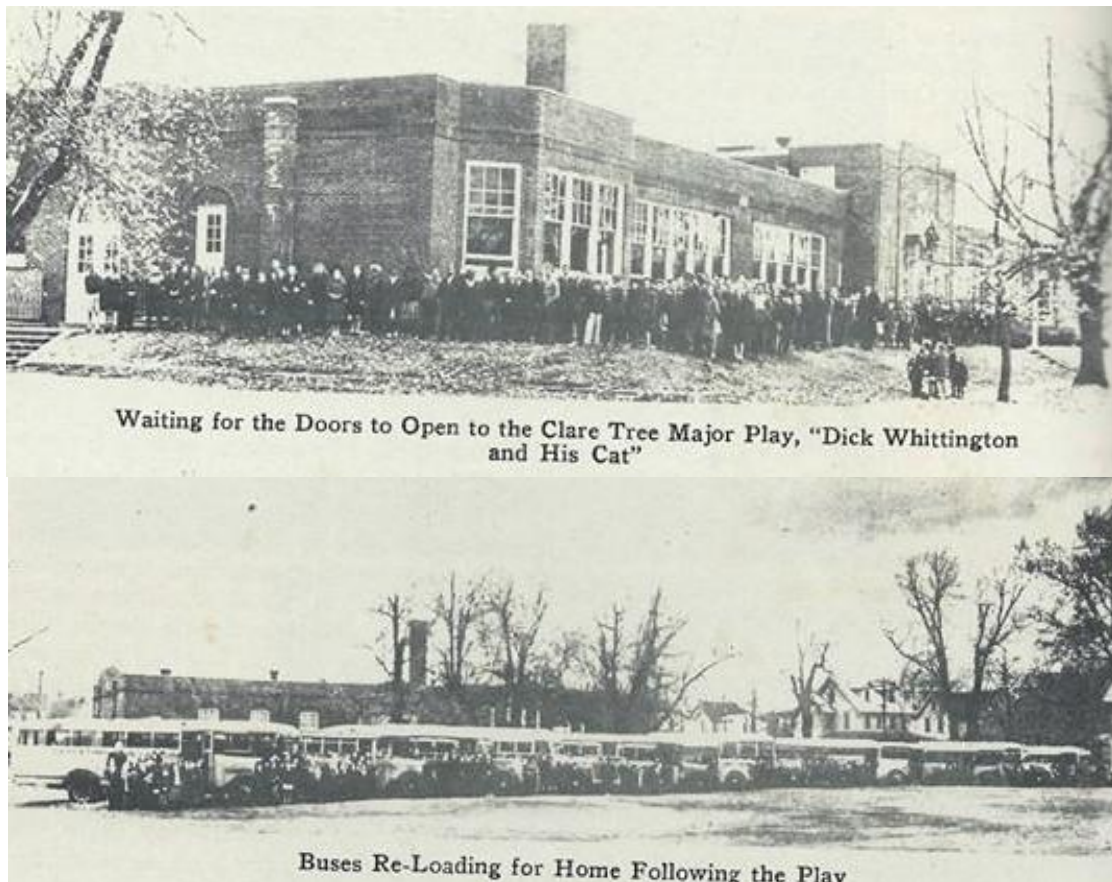
a plot of ground 190 feet on Chestnut Street by 200 feet on Walnut Street by 190 feet on Burlington Avenue. At a meeting of the legal town voters on February 27, 1924, a resolution was made to authorize the board of education to erect on this newly acquired piece of ground a schoolhouse of fireproof construction. Such a building was necessary because the accommodations provided in the Hickory Street School were inadequate and unsuited to the number of pupils attending the school.

The cornerstone of the new school, known as the Walnut Street School, was laid May 30, 1925.

The Walnut Street School brought quite a change in educational matters in Delanco for its completion meant that two buildings in good condition were ready to accommodate the children. The Hickory Street School, familiarly known now as the "old" school, was and is used as the home of the primary grades. The grammar grades use the newer building where a thoroughly modern school plant with special home economics and manual training rooms is available to them. A large auditorium serves both as assembly room and as gymnasium on rainy days. At other times the large school play-ground is used for physical education work. Here, several classes may be engaged at one time and all thoroughly enjoying their games. The auditorium in this school is familiar to many children throughout the county, for it is here the Clare Tree Major plays are presented several times each year. Our own schools feature two big affairs annually when every child takes part. Usually these programs are in the form of an operetta and a circus.

The library opened with the Walnut Street School. It serves the townspeople as well as the school children.

The children who attend the primary grades in the Hickory Street School in 1943 are more fortunate than those who attended in the earlier years of the history of the school. As time has gone by, many steps have been taken to protect the health and safety of the pupils. Outside fire escapes have



been built to help in case of fire. Electric lights in the halls and basement reduce the probability of accidents. Additional radiation and a blower in the furnace help to keep the children warm in winter. In addition to these steps extra precautions are metal stripping on the windows and a "storm shed." Another improvement was part of the safety program is new floors in the entire building. Modern chairs and tables have replaced the old desks in some of the rooms. Cots make it possible for the transported children to rest during the noon hour. Screens have been placed in every window in both buildings.

Lessons are a pleasure to the children. Very attractive books make reading easy and interesting. Pianos, Victrolas, and radios are available to aid in developing a real appreciation of good music and a sense of rhythm. Poster paints, water colors, finger paints, crayons, and clay give the children variety in the media of expression in arts. Stereographs, lantern slides, and moving pictures form another

part of the school experience. Picnics and trips are other worthwhile pleasures for the little folks.

Along with the changes in the school buildings has come a change in educational philosophy. It was realized that children learn more readily when they are in a social environment and work cooperatively. Wherever possible, equipment has been provided to encourage such a situation. For example, movable furniture is gradually replacing the old type. Children also learn when they are active and see their success. With this in mind, clubs have been formed to supplement activities and special interests in classes. Classes themselves are smaller so relationships are more informal. Several years ago the desire to have every child enjoy success in some line prompted the board of education to expand the curriculum to include an ungraded class. The only room then available was small and was equipped with stationary seats which



Physical Education

left little room for creative work. Now the class occupies a large room fully equipped with tools and materials.

With the broadening of the curriculum, music and physical education were the first subjects to be added. In music the children learn to sing, to play, and to listen. By active participation in any phase --- singing, listening, rhythms --- each child knows the thrill of being a part of a group or giving pleasure to a group.

Physical education, too, has met the requirements of the changing curriculum. Athletics and games provide opportunities for the development of the qualities of leadership, as well as the development of healthy bodies.

Art work began in Delanco five years ago when a small group of boys and girls formed an art club. They were proficient in copying and used lead pencils, crayons, and water colors. It was soon felt that lack of training was a handicap, so art was added to the curriculum in 1937. In the last five years, a big step has been taken from the early cramped work of the art club to the free expression of today. Each child, as he progresses through the grades, has the experience of using several kinds of art materials: crayons, water colors, tempera, fresco, charcoal, India ink, and finger paint. In addition, each child cuts paper, models clay, makes block prints, and works on scenery and costumes.

Creative work is also done by primary children in dramatizing stories and by English classes in writing and presenting original plays and programs.

The home economics department gives practical instruction in cooking and serving as well as in sewing. The manual training shop provides a course in woodworking.

During the spring of 1929, The Safety Patrol was organized under the supervision of the State Police. The group helps prevent accidents, and dangerous practices. It is very helpful in guiding the younger children across busy streets.

At present there are six clubs functioning: the press, art, airplane, Red Cross, hobby and glee clubs. These afford opportunities for free expression and the development of special interests.

Stereographs, lantern slides, and a motion picture projector make classes more interesting and help provide entertaining programs. Frequently pianos, Victrolas and radios are also heard as part of the school experience.

The children in Delanco live in a social environment where they work cooperatively toward a set goal wherein they will find a definite measure of success.

DELANCO TOWNSHIP

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