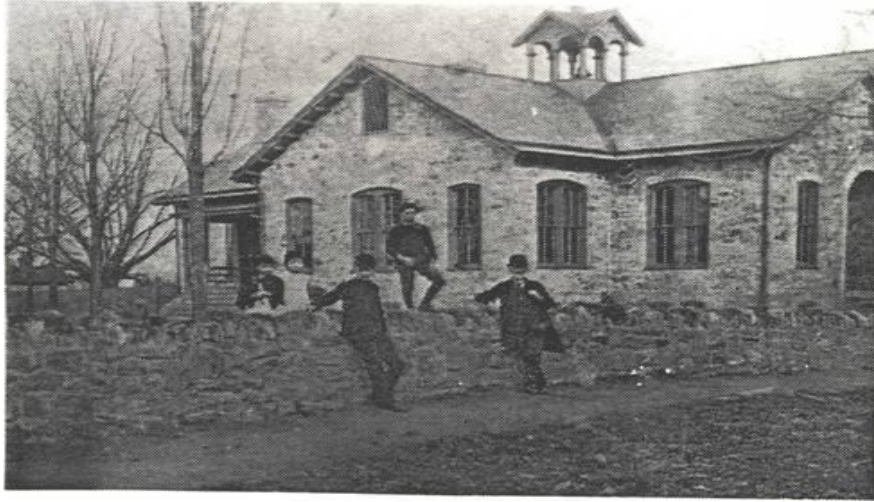


# HISTORY and DEVELOPMENT of the SCHOOL DISTRICT of CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP



by

**Alexander W. Scott**

**Cheltenham Elementary 1983**

*I dedicate this paper to my late beloved wife Florence Oeters Scott - C.H.S. '44. Her love and encouragement were always a strength to our family. She lived her entire life in Cheltenham Township and always spoke enthusiastically about its schools and the quality of the education she received while attending Wyncote Elementary, Thomas Williams Junior High and Cheltenham High School.*

For nearly 300 years the residents of Cheltenham Township have regarded the education of their young people as one of the prime responsibilities of the community. This attitude began with the early Quaker settlers in William Penn's new Province, when on April 5, 1697, John Barnes deeded land to the Cheltenham Friends. This 120 acre grant was "for and towards the erection of a Meeting House for Friends and towards the maintenance of a school." The following December, the Cheltenham Friends asked the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting for financial assistance to carry out the provisions of Barnes' deed. Although few written records of those early school days exist, it is believed that prior to 1697 the Cheltenham Friends held Meetings and school in a log house. However, it is a known fact that from 1683 Richard Wall's house, originally made of wood, was used as a Meeting House. It could be possible that his house was also used as a school for the few children in the area during those early years. The name of the first teacher at Abington Friends School (the land grant was in Abington Township and hence the Meeting's new name) is unknown, but the Pennsylvania Archives of 1701 mention a Jacob Taylor who was "concerned in a school at Abington." Since the majority of our early settlers were Quakers, the Abington Friends School remained the only school for the children of the Cheltenham area for over 40 years.

In 1734, Cheltenham had only 23 tenants and land owners and their families, a total of less than 200 inhabitants. Because of the small population, the earliest schools were to be shared with neighboring communities.

The first such school was erected on land granted September 14, 1748, by Justus Wilhelm Rubinkam (later spelled Rubicam) and his wife Susanna. Her maiden name was Rittenhouse, and she was the great granddaughter of William Rittenhouse who built the first paper mill in America. The Rubicam School was located near the present intersection of Thouron Avenue and Sharpnack Street about 300 yards east of the front gate of Ivy Hill Cemetery on Easton Road in Philadelphia.

The indenture stated that on the one quarter acre a school was to be built for the children of the Bristol (now the Oak Lane area), Cheltenham, and Springfield Townships. The trustees named in the indenture were Anthony Williams, Sr., John Cleaver, Ezekiel Potts, and Isaac Cleaver. A second deed of trust was made in 1790 by Anthony Williams, Sr. and Isaac Cleaver (sole surviving trustees to Anthony Williams, Jr., George Williams, Henry Childs, John Unrue, Absalom Michener, and Jesse Kirk). The school itself was built of stone about 14 x 18 feet with a door and 6 windows. It was maintained by voluntary contributions from the surrounding residents and served the area for nearly 45 years until a new school was built even closer to the boundary of Cheltenham Township.

The next school built for the children of Cheltenham was the result of an indenture dated October 13, 1783, by Andrew and Ann Redheifer. The deed of trust stated that the land was "for the use of the neighborhood in general for an English Protestant school or church as they shall from time to time think fit and for no other use or uses whatsoever." It stood on Mermaid Lane in Springfield Township near the intersection of the Cheltenham and Springfield Township lines. The land was 45 perches in size; the trustees named were Isaiah Hubs and John Slingluff. The surrounding property was owned by Polly Hicks and thus the school became known as the Hicks School. The original log schoolhouse was rebuilt in 1832 by contributions from residents of Cheltenham and Springfield Townships. On August 20, 1868, the building was sold to John Houston for 300 dollars. After court costs the net proceeds were divided between the two townships with the February 1, 1869, School Board minutes of the Cheltenham School District reporting the receipt of \$86.26 as its share.

The Williams School, located on the south side of Cheltenham Avenue east of Limekiln pike, was built as a replacement for the Rubicam School. The will of Anthony Williams, Sr., dated July 31, 1793, bequeathed "one small lot of land, part of the plantation whereon I now dwell" to Benjamin Mather, Henry Childs, Jr.,

Absalom Michener, and Benjamin Shoemaker, Jr. to be held in trust for "the people called Quakers held in Abington." Williams left 10 pounds to help build the school and 100 pounds towards its support. The trustees were directed to build the school for the inhabitants living not more than one and a quarter miles from the school within 2 years from the date of the will or the entire bequest would be void. The school was built in accordance with the wishes of the will, and the school and property remained in the care of the trustees appointed by the Abington Meeting until Cheltenham adopted the Common School Law in 1838. In 1801 a second deed of trust was made by Benjamin Mather and Henry Childs, Jr. (the two surviving trustees which appointed Anthony Williams, Jr., Edward Edwards, Levi Tyson, Thomas Mather, Oliver Wilson, and Isaac Michener new trustees). After the 1838 Common School Law the school was managed in partnership by the directors of Cheltenham and the old Bristol Township which was later merged into Philadelphia's 22nd ward. It was thus managed until June 1873, by which time both districts had constructed other schools and therefore withdrew their support. The building was then converted into a private dwelling. There had been a third deed of trust in 1847 and a fourth in 1881. After the school was converted into a private dwelling, the trustees continued to manage the rents and the accrued interest.

By 1784, when Montgomery County was formed, Cheltenham Township was beginning to grow. This was especially true of the eastern side of the township where, because of early mills, the area was already known as Milltown. The first United States census in 1790 recorded a township of 620 inhabitants.

The real beginning of the Cheltenham school system can be dated November 1795, with the opening of the Milltown School on Ashbourne Road. The school must be considered one of the first, and records would seem to indicate the very first, built in Montgomery County as a public school. While there are reported earlier school buildings in the county open to all children they were built and operated by local churches. The Milltown School was built by three local citizens to meet the educational needs of the neighborhood

children. Three of the more prominent citizens of Milltown at that time were Benjamin Rowland, Frederick Altemus, and Col. Samuel Miles. In a deed of trust dated July 7, 1796, nearly a year after the school actually opened, Benjamin and Mary Rowland gave 14 perches of land, Frederick and Mary Altemus 48 perches, and Samuel and Katherine Miles 58 perches. On these three adjoining tracts of ground, making altogether 120 perches (160 equal an acre), the Milltown School was built. The trustees as named in the deed were Thomas Fletcher, Caleb Hallowell, John Thomson, John Jones, Amos Jones, and William Bailey.

This first Cheltenham school, constructed of rough stone, contained only one room, with a desk for the teacher and long desks and benches for the pupils; an open fireplace burned in one end of the school.

The free system of public education in Pennsylvania was still some 40 years in the future, so the pupils of the Milltown School paid tuition as well as buying their own school supplies. Tuition cost about 3 cents a day; a year's supply of books and materials came to about 1 dollar. Each pupil was required to have an English reader or New Testament, a Comly's or Byerly's spelling book, and Pike's or Rose's arithmetic; as well as slate, writing implement,

6 sheets of foolscap paper stitched together, a small ink holder, and a goose quill. Those children whose parents were unable to pay the fee or provide the supplies were admitted free. They were termed "poor scholars," or "county scholars," and were not well received by their tuition paying companions.

The first Cheltenham Township teacher of which there is any record was Samuel Brown Wylie. He was born May 21, 1773, in County Antrim, Ireland, and received his education at the University of Glasgow. As a young man he left for America and on October 18, 1797, arrived in New Castle Delaware. He found his way to Cheltenham and became the teacher at the Milltown School. Accounts of his life indicate that he taught there for only a short time. In 1803 he was ordained in the Presbyterian Church and became pastor of the First Reformed Church of Philadelphia which is now the Chambers-Wylie Memorial Presbyterian Church on Broad Street below Spruce. In 1816 he received his Doctor of Divinity degree from Dickinson College. He served for many years as principal of the University of Pennsylvania Academy and in 1828 became professor of ancient languages at the University of Pennsylvania. He spoke 14 different languages. From 1834 until his retirement in 1848 he was Vice Provost of the university.



SAMUEL B. WYLIE

In 1797 he was appointed teacher  
at the Milltown School

Besides serving the educational needs of the Milltown community, the school building was also used for religious services. During the school's first 40 years it was used at different times by the Baptists, Swedenborgians, and Methodists.

When a second room with a connecting hallway was added (1857) to the school its name was changed to the Cheltenham School. This name change resulted from the fact that on June 4, 18\_7, the first post office in Cheltenham Township had just opened near the school. The name Cheltenham was chosen for the post office since the name Milltown was already being used elsewhere in Pennsylvania.

In 1883 the two-room school was torn down and on the same site the George K. Heller School, named for a local resident who served as a school director for 35 years, was built. The School Board originally decided to name it the Rowland School after the family who contributed so much to the growth of the area but at a subsequent meeting it was decided to name it after George Heller.

The school was not completed by September 1st so classes began in the Cheltenham Hall at Ashbourne Road and Central Avenue. The increasing population of the area necessitated the school's first addition in 1893. A new 56 x 31 foot wing was added with an 8 x 25 foot hallway. It cost \$6,000 and gave two more rooms now making a total of 5 classrooms. Another major addition was made in 1906. When in March of 1953 it ceased serving as a school, it was considered the oldest public school in Pennsylvania (1795-1953) in continuous use on the same site. The building still serves the community as the Cheltenham Art Center.

In 1876 a young woman, Carrie V. Speck, became a primary teacher at the Cheltenham School and began the longest teaching career in the history of Cheltenham Township schools. She was 16 years old when she began teaching at the school in which she was once a pupil and when she retired in 1926 Carrie had completed 50 years of educating Cheltenham's children. Dr. H.H. Baish, former Executive Secretary of the Public School Employees' Retirement Board, said she was the only teacher in Pennsylvania to ever serve one community continuously for that length of time. In 1882 she was appointed principal of the Cheltenham School. Carrie held this position until 1905. In 1890, while principal of the now Heller School, she was the first educator in Montgomery County to organize a school saving bank. In 1905 Carrie was transferred to Cheltenham High School where she remained until her retirement in 1926. While there she taught English, history, pedagogy, algebra, and penmanship. She was also chairman of the history department. Before principal Dr. Grizzell left the high school to become professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania he asked Carrie to reorganize the library program. She finished her 50 years as librarian.

In appreciation for her remarkable career and contribution to the development of the Cheltenham School District through its early years, the Board of School Directors at their meeting of June 2, 1926, unanimously adopted the following unprecedented resolution:

"The Board hereby agrees in consideration of the exceptional period of faithful service of Carrie V. Speck to pay to Miss Speck the difference between her present salary and the allowance to which she is now entitled from the Teachers' Retirement Fund until Miss Speck shall reach the age of seventy years and thereafter for the remainder of her life the difference between her present retirement allowance and the retirement allowance to which she would be entitled were she to remain in the teaching service until seventy years of age."

While Cheltenham did not immediately adopt the Common School System after the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had passed the Free School Act of 1834, they did appoint an interim Board of Directors. In 1836, at a meeting of the inhabitants of Cheltenham Township, John J. Williams, Thomas Rowland, Jacob Myers, George K. Heller, Samuel Fenton, and Comly Shoemaker were appointed as a Board of Directors. At a later meeting it was decided to take no action on the school question until the next township election in 1837. At that election the question of adopting the Common School System was rejected 12 to 34, but on March 16, 1838, another vote was taken, and this time it carried by a 56 to 40 vote. The first official Board of Directors consisted of Joel Mann, 'president; George K. Heller, secretary; John J. Williams, treasurer; Thomas Rowland, Bartholomew Mather, and William Gillingham.

Although the new state law created a public school system, local parents were still obliged to pay one-half of the tuition cost and purchase the books used by their children. It was not until 1855 that the Board of Directors passed a resolution to furnish for its young people a public education supported completely by township-wide taxes.

The advent of the public school system and the beginning of Cheltenham's emergence as a suburban township with growing connections with Philadelphia signified a need for more schools. The children living in the western part of the township had to attend those schools previously mentioned which were located in Philadelphia County. The new school district began to move ahead in building its own schools where needed. In an indenture dated March 24, 1842, James and Mary Harmer sold a portion of their land for \$30 to the Board of School Directors. The one-room Harmer Hill School was built on the north side of Church Road just west of Rices Mill Road.

While the school sat on a beautiful location with a view of the surrounding country-side from its high elevation it soon became apparent that it was not close enough to the center of the growing population. On February 3, 1853, a half acre of land was bought from Dr. Charles Bolton and his wife Lucy Ann for \$75. A \$600 one-room school was built on the new Church Road site about 100 yards west of Limekiln pike on what is now Beaver College property. Additions were made in 1871 and 1878 which together cost about \$6000. It was referred to as the Audenried School though this name was not used until after the addition was completed in January 1879. The School Board named it in honor of William Audenried the father of one of the board members. The late Mr. Audenried had been active in the early public school movement in Pennsylvania. The local citizens had been calling it the Harmer Hill School after the earlier Church Road school and until 1879 the School Board minutes referred to it as the Cheltenham Valley School. It closed in 1907 with the building of a new school in Glenside.

The old-fashioned school bell was a common feature in Cheltenham Township schools during this period. Some years prior to the last addition to the Audenried School a fine-toned bell was purchased, by subscription of the people in the neighborhood, at a cost of \$70 from E.A. and G.K. Meneely of Troy, New York. When the Edge Hill School was built in 1890 the bell was transferred to the new school. This bell was a great source of pride to the people and remained in existence in the township for many years.

The purchase of land in March 1842, to build the Harmer Hill School, meant the eastern and western parts of the township would each have a public school. Only those children in the central part were now without a school. A few months after the Harmer Hill land purchase, Daniel and Sarah Rorer gave land on Mill Road near the Myers-Ervien Fork Factory to the Board of School Directors. The indenture was dated August 2, 1842, and stipulated that the land was to be used exclusively for the building of a school. Since the land was centrally located, it seemed only natural to name it the Middle School. In less than 20 years, increased population necessitated the consideration of a new building. At first, space was rented in what is known as the "William Penn House" on the north side of Church Road facing Mill Road. The School Board was unable to buy land adjacent to the Middle School so after numerous votes to resolve the problem, it was decided to buy land on Church Road, near the present Stahr Road, from Henry P. Birchall and William and Susanne Birchall for \$600. The deed was dated November 14, 1859.

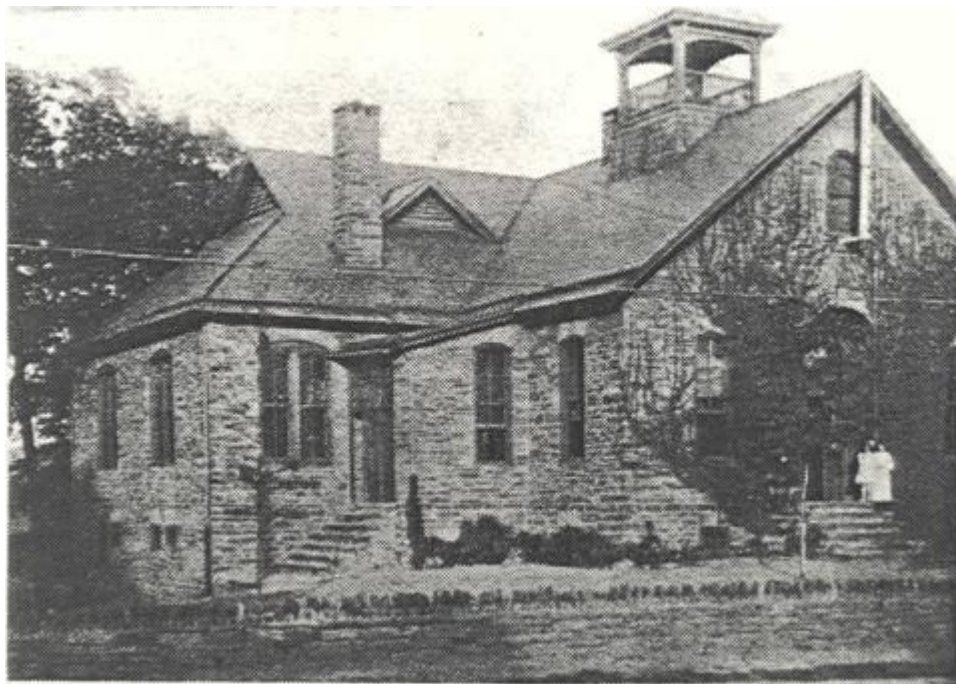
The Middle School building was sold and still stands today as a private home at 7860 Mill Road. Because the original 1842 gift from Daniel Rorer stated that the land was to be used for the "sole use and purpose of having a public school house thereon erected," it was necessary to have Daniel Rorer and his wife join on the sale of the school and land. This was done and the Rorers received half of the \$200 sale price.





First Shoemaker School 1859-1890

1859 - 1890



Second Shoemaker School

1890 - 1972

On the land purchased from the Birchalls, the first Shoemaker U/ School was erected. At first the School Board continued to call it the Middle School, then later named it the Shoemakertown School after the village near which it stood. Still later it became known as the Shoemaker School in honor of Robert Shoemaker, a former School Board member.

The new school stood on an acre of land but included a public road and Tookany Creek which greatly reduced the area available for the school building and other facilities. This acreage had been purchased at this time because no one else in the area would sell ground to the school district. The school itself stood on a high bit of ground and was the only part not affected by flooding from the Tookany Creek. However, the playground, subject to frequent flooding, seldom dried out. The school, now with a second floor added in 1873, was maintained on this site for 30 years.

At a Board of Directors' meeting on December 2, 1889, it was \_ reported that land had been purchased across Church Road for the purpose of building a larger school. The price of \$3,500 was paid to the estate of the late J. Francis Fisher; the contract to build the school cost \$7,762. James Satterthwaite received \$150

to straighten the course of Tookany Creek which had originally run through the Fisher property. The Satterthwaite quarries provided the stone to build the school. The new three room Shoemaker School opened on March 13, 1891, while the original one was sold to Maurice P. Horner (July 31, 1893). He converted it into a private dwelling that still stands at 538 Church Road. Through the years the increasing population brought a major addition to the second Shoemaker School in 1937. By way of contrast the decreasing enrollment resulted in it closing (1973). Following rental to the Beth Jacob Day School and a period of vacancy the second Shoemaker School was demolished (1979) to make way for the construction of the new Elkins Park Library.

The 1790 census recorded 620 inhabitants. In the next 60 years the population doubled to 1,292. Primarily due to the expansion of the North Penn Railroad into Montgomery County, including 4 stations in Cheltenham Township, the decade between 1850 and 1860 showed the first major increase in Cheltenham's population. No longer were the township's contacts with Philadelphia merely based on its being an outlet for Cheltenham's farm and mill products. Now people could work in Philadelphia and live in Cheltenham. During the remaining decades of the 19th century some of its mills gained recognition around the world. Eventually the increasingly residential nature of the township prevailed. This change was hastened by its becoming the locale in which many wealthy families in the Philadelphia business community (Wanamaker, Widener, Stetson, Elkins and Gribbel) as well as prominent citizens, such as Lucretia Mott, took up residence.

Before discussing the further expansion of the school district, i)fcJ a brief look at the schools about the time of the Civil War might be of interest. The school day varied with the seasons.

From April to November the hours were 8:00-11:45 and 1:30-5:00 with a 15 minute recess each session. From November to April the hours were 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-4:00 with a 10 minute recess each session. School was held on alternate Saturdays. After several years of unsuccessful attempts the majority of the School Board was successful in establishing a five day week at the June 6, 1859, meeting. Schools were open 10 months a year, well above the Montgomery County average of 7.2 months and the 4 or 5 months of some nearby districts. The monthly salary of the four male teachers was \$36 which exceeded the county average of \$28. The two women teachers were not paid as well with their \$18 a month being below the county average of \$21. The monthly cost for each of the 324 pupils was 61 cents, highest in the county and well above the average of 47 cents. To pay for these expenditures, the citizens were taxed 4 mills and the district received \$134.24 in State appropriations.

In the years between 1860 and 1900 Cheltenham was to grow from 1,979 to 6,154 inhabitants, and 5 more school buildings were to be erected.

Lucretia Mott's son-in-law, Edward M. Davis, was a prominent land developer in the period immediately following the civil War. To encourage purchasers, he promised to provide and maintain a school in his



Camptown development. He built a two-room school house on what is now known as School Lane. On January 6, 1868, he requested the School Board to appoint a teacher. They immediately investigated the situation and the following month agreed to rent the building for \$7.50 a month and employed Ella Randall as the teacher. The school opened February 3, 1868.

Before the year was over, Edward Davis offered to sell the school to the district for \$2,500. After nearly a year of negotiations the school was finally purchased August 30, 1870, for \$1,400 and became part of the school system. Soon this building became inadequate to accommodate the increasing population of Camptown. On August 7, 1877, one and a half acres were purchased for \$1,000 at the corner of Willow and Sycamore Avenues. The one room school opened March 6, 1878, but the local population had grown so that it was necessary to use both the old and the new LaMott (Camptown's new name) Schools. Immediately a two room addition was begun and when completed in January 1880, the old school building was sold. By 1901 the school had grown to a five room school. The decreased population of the 1930's caused the LaMott School to be closed in June 1940. The building still serves the community as the LaMott Community Center.

In August of 1873, two lots were purchased on Union Avenue which were to be the most important in the educational development of Cheltenham Township. Hamilton and Rosa MacDonald were paid \$359.07 in an August 27, 1873, deed and Mathias and Sarah Shoemaker were paid \$550 in an August 6, 1873, deed for the two adjoining lots. The School Board immediately contracted to build a one-room brick school for \$1,965. Every effort was made to have the school finished before the winter months. Classes began December 29, 1873. The reason for the immediate building of the school was the crowded conditions at the LaMott School where Ashbourne children had been attending. The congestion had been so bad that in January 1873, a house was rented from William Kirkpatrick until a new school could be built in Ashbourne. The teacher, Sallie Leech, was paid \$30 per month to teach in the front room of the house, and she in turn paid \$6 for the use of the rest of the house. Mr. Kirkpatrick was paid \$12 per month rent.

The continued growth of the township was having its effect on the school, and in 5 years the new Ashbourne School was so crowded that some students had to be assigned to other schools. The Board

authorized the building of a new and larger Ashbourne School on the same site; it was completed in October of 1881.

In June 1884, George W. Flounders was appointed principal of the Ashbourne School. At that time Cheltenham's schools were for grades 1-9. As a matter of fact none of Pennsylvania's township schools at that time had programs above the 9th grade.

In 1884, as Montgomery County was entering its second century, Flounders made an exciting request of the Cheltenham School Board -- expand the school to a complete high school. It was 11 years before the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was to pass a law establishing township high schools that Cheltenham planned Pennsylvania's first township high school. Mr. Flounders made his request at the November 3rd School Board meeting and at the same meeting Robert Shoemaker, Benjamin R. Myers and W.H. Myers were appointed a committee to explore the possibility. The School Board, at its December 1, 1884, meeting, officially took the farsighted step of approving Mr. Flounders' recommendation.

Mr. Flounders had already begun a class of four students - Kathryn E. Murphy, Anna L. Fenton, Gertrude Howard and Robert S. Summers -- and after one year of this "advanced course," they became Cheltenham High School's first graduating class in June 1885. The commencement exercises were held at Parvin Hall, the

Sunday School building at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, on June 26, 1885, at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Three of those first graduates went on to higher education -- Kathryn Murphy took courses at West Chester State Normal School, later studied music in Providence, Rhode Island and became an assistant to the music supervisor in the Philadelphia school system; Gertrude Howard taught school and later studied stenography and typewriting before moving to Quakertown; Robert S. Summers was an 1889 graduate of Hahnemann Medical College and set-up practice in Philadelphia; Anna L. Fenton was married to Mr. Leshner and they lived in Philadelphia.

The first course of study included -- geography, history, civil government, American and English literature, rhetoric, algebra, plane geometry, Latin, physics, and chemistry.

The Senior Class  
of the  
Cheltenham High school  
Request your presence at the  
Commencement  
Farvin Hall, Ashbourne, PA.,  
Friday June 26, 1885, at 8 P. M.



The minutes of the September 2, 1885, School Board meeting referred to the Ashbourne School for the first time as "the high school." County Superintendent Hoffecker wrote in his March 1885 report to the State -- "Cheltenham Township has established a township high school, which bids fair to be a complete success, and thus place its schools in the front rank in the county."

George Flounders left the high school in December 1886, and was succeeded by David C. Cornell, who was principal until 1889. In the summer of 1889 an addition was made to the building, and the high school and grammar departments were separated.

With Mr. Cornell's leaving, Milton Cooper became principal and made the high school a two year program. During the winter of 1893 he and one of the high school teachers, Mr. Miller, laid out a three year course of study, which would enable the graduates to enter directly (and without examination) some of the area colleges. As Mr. Cooper left in December 1894, he was unable to put all of his plans into operation. His successor, John L. Shroy, continued the planning, and in June 1895, the high school graduated five members of the class of 1894, who had returned to take the third year. There was no commencement in 1896, as none of the regular class of 1895 took a third year. The first class to complete the, full three year course was graduated in June 1897.

A major curriculum revision creating two courses of study, Classical or Preparatory and the English, was developed in 1896. The Classical course prepared students to enter the University of Pennsylvania, Swarthmore, and Haverford Colleges. Mathematics including solid geometry and trigonometry, modern and ancient history, and literature were part of both courses. It also required three years of both Latin and German while the English course required three years of only one of the languages. The English course included bookkeeping in 10th grade and manual training in 11th grade. In June of 1896 the 9th grade students were informed as to the details of the new 3 year program so they could choose the course they intended to pursue the following September.

The distinction of being the first to receive diplomas belongs to the 12 graduates of 1894. Also, the first yearbook issued by Cheltenham High School was the trailblazing class of 1894. "Again we are the first!" the preface of the yearbook proudly proclaimed. For reasons not known the 25 page book with 6 pictures was not published until 1896. The members of the class received their copies at their annual reunion on August 26, 1896, in Shenberger's woods near Ashbourne. The cover was lavender and white with gold trim.

At the June 30, 1891, School Board meeting another major educational step was taken when Milton Cooper, high school principal, was asked to meet monthly with teachers from all the schools to discuss curriculum. He reported at the October 5th meeting that a district course of study had been developed by the teachers to be used in all the grammar schools. Prior to this, while each school had a head teacher or principal, they had a local School Board member who supervised the program and building needs. Teachers were hired and teaching materials selected by the local board member. Now there would be a continuity of programs through the grades, though the local board member would still exercise some authority over his individual school.

Mr. Cooper's responsibilities made him Cheltenham's first supervising principal. From his appointment in 1891 until his resignation in December 1894, the official School Board minutes referred to him as "visiting teacher." They did recognize him as having been supervising principal when they accepted his resignation.

At a special meeting on May 7, 1901, Charles A. Wagner, who had been supervising principal since June 1897, was appointed Cheltenham's first superintendent at a salary of \$1,200. With the 1900 census showing a population over 6,000, the decision was also made at this meeting to reorganize as an independent school district.

Barely 10 years after the first 4 students had been graduated from Cheltenham High School, an alumni association was formed. On the night of January 15, 1895, Mr. Cooper and 5 graduates met to discuss such an organization. On February 21st a second meeting was held, a constitution adopted, and officers elected. The earliest listing of C.H.S. Alumni Association officers that can be found dates from October 1895. Since this is only 9 months after the association's formation, there is a strong possibility it is the original list -- Margaret

Coonahan, '92, president; Howard Terry, '92, vice president; Harriet L. Unruh, '94, secretary; Blanche M. Rowland, '93, treasurer. Margaret Coonahan attended Millersville State Normal School and came back to teach at Wyncote School in 1894 and later became principal of the LaMott School. Howard Terry was a bookkeeper with a Philadelphia firm. Harriet Unruh married C. Lester Taylor and lived in Jenkintown. Blanche

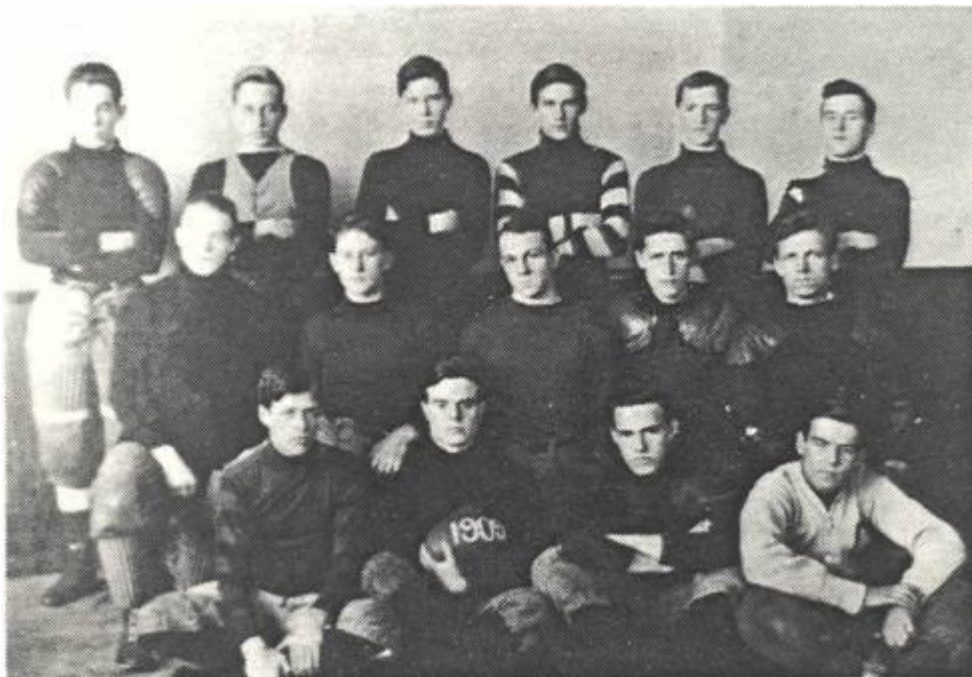
M. Rowland took the home economics program at Drexel Institute. One of the Alumni Association's first acts was to design a gold pin to be awarded to the best worker of the graduating class. Fannie C. Myers '95 was the first to win this prize.

*No* record has been found detailing the beginning of organized, athletics. at Cheltenham High School but some facts are known. In 1895 the boys organized 2 Shiny Clubs. One was captained by Alvin Poole and the other by Charles Linson. The book "Tom Brown's School Days at Rugby" was presented to the outstanding player of the winning team. In April 1896, the boys organized a baseball team with Alvin Poole as captain and Howett Wentz the business manager. Unfortunately, the "Cheltenham District School News," a monthly newspaper published by the school district from 1895 until 1925, does not report more than the organizing of the team. The real beginning of organized athletics resulted from the formation of an Athletic Association in September 1898. Following this, football, baseball, and track teams were formed to compete on a regular basis against neighboring schools. In 1906 the C.H.S. Athletic Association added a basketball team.

While the educational progress of the Cheltenham Schools during the past 50 years can be found in School Board minutes and superintendents' reports, such is not the case of those early school years in the last half of the 19th century and the first quarter of this century. Many of the changes were never recorded or more often written about with few details. This was true with several of Cheltenham's innovative curriculum and educational programs around the turn of the century.



Cheltenham High School baseball team 1903



Cheltenham High School football team

During the 1895-96 school year the district began holding \_ parents' meetings at several schools. The principal address was usually given by a State Legislator or prominent educator from a Pennsylvania college i.e. West Chester State, University of Pennsylvania; Lehigh, Millersville State, and East Stroudsburg State. The Norristown Herald newspaper reported in an editorial -"The parents' meetings which are being held in Cheltenham district are a feature which could be very profitably introduced into all the school districts of Montgomery County .....The enlightened and progressive Board of Directors of Cheltenham Township deserve much credit for the introduction of this innovation. It ought to be generally extended wherever it is intended that the public school shall rise to the highest standard of usefulness." These meetings were very well received by the parents with some grammar schools of only 90 pupils having meetings with 500 in attendance. The average attendance at all the meetings held this first year was 350.

Another program to involve parents took place on November 21,1895, when, through the effort\$ of the high school principal, J.L. Shroy, the district held a "Visitors Day" in all schools. Children served as ushers to guide the parents to the room they wished to visit. The 202 visitors so encouraged the district that December 20th was announced as the next day for visiting the classrooms. The number of visitors increased to 268.

It is not known when vocal music was first introduced as part of the curriculum but by September 1896, three of the schools regularly taught it. At the November 1896 School Board meeting it was decided to place vocal music as a branch of study in all the schools. In 1899, Pauline Sterling was supervisor of music.

The year 1896 'saw other music programs introduced into the high school's opening exercises. The first school orchestra – 2 violins, cornet, and piano -- played the morning march and the choir, under the leadership of Miss Cassavant, united with the student body in song.

The school district showed its desire for all young people to have the opportunity to continue their education when it planned the first free public night school in Pennsylvania. The first class was held on January 11,1897, with 36 members. They were young people (ranging in age from 16 to 30) who left school to enter the working world before completing their education. An editorial in the Norristown Review newspaper noted -- "Cheltenham Township has the honor of having edtablished the first township high school in the state. The district now comes to the front in another line, being the first to establish a public night school. The residents of Cheltenham are to be congratulated upon the progressive educational spirit that prevails there."

During these early years one of the major developments in the high school curriculum was the introduction of the general course or what was later called the commercial course. Bookkeeping, shorthand, and typing were introduced into the school's program. With the Ashbourne School containing both the grammar and high school facilities, space was at a premium. Ten years after the high school began there was talk of building a new school to house only the high school. Meanwhile, in 1901 the crowding was so bad in the grammar grades that 2 pupils had to use 1 desk. To relieve this strain, the School Board rented the parlor in the Yarnall house at the corner of Ashbourne Road and Union Avenue, to be used as a classroom.

While most of the high school graduates during this period attended local Pennsylvania colleges, it should be noted that Aubrey Bowser, a 1903 graduate from the LaMott community, was Cheltenham's first student to attend Harvard. Upon his graduation, as a member of the class of 1907, he joined the editorial staff of the National Review magazine.

The school colors came into being in November 1900, when the high school adopted a school pin. It was in the shape of a flag with the letters C.H.S. in gold on a blue field. The year before, the class of 1899 was the first not to adopt a class pin when instead they became the first to have a class ring.

In 1906 the transition to a first class high school was completed by absorbing the 9th grade, which was being taught in the Wyncote School, and by making it a full 4 year high school program. This was made possible with the opening of a new high school building on MaEch 17, 1906, at High School Road and Montgomery Avenue. It was one of the first township schools in Pennsylvania built for the specific purpose of being a high school.



The 5 acre site, purchased from Martha K. Tomlinson on August 31, 1904, for \$12,500, was chosen because it was centrally located and a short distance from the Elkins Park train station. Trains were one of the principal means of transportation for Cheltenham's high school students. In 1903 the school district had the foresight to establish a transportation system for those high school students who lived at points too distant from the school and who did not have access to a train. Unfortunately, during the 1908-09 school year the Montgomery County Court ruled it illegal for a school district to fund the transportation of its pupils. It was a few years later before the district was once again able to legally transport its pupils. During that time there was a slight decrease in the high school enrollment.

With the opening of the new high school, 3 courses of study were offered -- college preparatory, normal preparatory and commercial. Besides a full selection of minor courses, a college preparatory student was offered the following major courses: algebra, plane geometry, solid geometry, trigonometry, Latin, German, Greek, American literature, English literature, American history, English history, Greek and Roman history, geology, botany, zoology, chemistry and physics.

After the 1906 high school was opened, the Ashbourne School continued for grades 1-8 (the 8th grade was briefly housed in the new high school) until the Myers School was opened a block away in 1923. The industrial arts department was then moved from the high school building and housed in the Ashbourne School. The now empty rooms at the high school were turned into a cafeteria. Chairs were bought and the tables were built in the new industrial arts facility.

The first school cafeteria program had been organized in March 1906 for the high school students. During the noon lunch hour a counter was set-up by a Mrs. Comly. Cocoa, milk, tea, soup, sandwiches and fruit were available to both teachers and students.

The Ashbourne School continued to house the industrial arts program until 1951 when new facilities were built next to the 1926 high school. During the Second World War the building served the students by day and at night gave vocational training to adults so they could move into war industries.

With the opening of the new 1906 high school, the first real school library was begun. Since 1884 there had always been a library facility but it was small and not systematically organized. As a matter of fact, the library had originally been opened in 1884 as the public library for the Ashbourne community. It was not well patronized so as to warrant continued township support so it was given to the school. It contained about 650 volumes of which about 450 were prose works. The new library contained 1,500 volumes which were all catalogued by a township resident, Miss Jane B. Haines of Cheltenham. In 1907 a professional library for teachers was made available. It began with 75 current books and subscriptions to 5 educational magazines.

Beginning on October 1, 1904, the provisions of the Compulsory Attendance Law were enforced in Cheltenham. The township assessor provided each school with a list of school age children living in its area. Of the 1,360 school age children living in Cheltenham Township, 1,210 were already attending school. Those not attending were teenagers who had already left school to seek permanent employment.

Realizing that proper and prompt communications are important to an emerging school district, the Keystone Telephone Company was asked to connect all the schools with the main office in Ashbourne. This was completed in November of 1904.

During the early years of Cheltenham School District its students were setting marks for those who followed to equal or surpass. Mary E. Refsnyder, a member of the 1908 class, set a record that has not been broken or even equaled. Upon her graduation, Mary had not missed a single day of school since she entered 1st grade at the Edge Hill School. The following certificate, signed by the entire School Board, was presented to her at graduation: "This Certificate of Approbation is awarded to Mary E. Refsnyder, a member of the graduating class of the Cheltenham High School, for perfect attendance from the time of her entrance as a pupil of the Edge Hill Primary Room, September 1, 1896, to the day of her graduation from high school, June 19, 1908."

The class of 1910 decided their yearbook should have a name and they chose "El Delator." They printed 500

copies of this 88 page book which sold for *25 cents*. Thus began a tradition that has continued through the years.

During the latter part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, several grammar schools were built. On December 15, 1890, on land purchased from George D. Heist, the Edge Hill School opened on Limekiln Pike near the old Montier Cemetery. The growth of the local iron ore industry had brought an increase of population in the Edge Hill Village area. In 1901 an addition was made to the original 3 room school. The school closed in 1940 as a result of decreasing enrollment and in 1948 was sold to the Knights of Columbus, who still occupy it.

For 40 years after the Harmer Hill School was moved to the Limekiln Pike area, the Wyncote community was without a local public school. This lack of a local education facility led to the opening of the Cheltenham Hills School. It was a private school operated by the Heacock family and was used by many Wyncote residents as well as those from nearby communities. The critical need for a public school expressed to the School Board by Wyncote families necessitated the renting of space in the Smith's home at the corner of Greenwood and Fernbrook Avenues. With Florence Ridpath as their teacher, 37 pupils began school on September 17, 1894. Because of insufficient supplies for the larger than expected class, the school was closed at the end of the first day. It opened again in about a week when new supplies had been purchased and a second teacher hired.

One of the pupils on that first day at the Smith house was the poet Ezra Pound who lived on Fernbrook Avenue and whose father was to later serve on the School Board that built the 1906 high school. Pound received all his schooling in Cheltenham's public and private schools -- Cheltenham Hills School, Wyncote School and the Cheltenham Military Academy.

Meanwhile, on July 5, 1894, the school district bought land at Greenwood Avenue and Walt Lane for \$3,500 from Henry and Mary Walt. On this 1 acre plot the \$10,261 two story Wyncote School opened June 4, 1895. Because of the smallness of the piece of land the school was built at an angle to the street in order to take best advantage of the space.

This school served the community for over 50 years but the population explosion after the Second World War meant a need for a new Wyncote School. Actually, the parents of the Wyncote area had requested a new school at the April 1933 School Board meeting. The crowded conditions of the school required that kindergarten and 1st grade be housed in Thomas Williams Junior High School for most of the 1930's and 40's. The School Board took action on building a new Wyncote School prior to the entrance of the United States in the Second World War. On March 18, 1941, they acquired by condemnation nearly 6 acres of land at Church and Rices Mill Roads. It had been part of the former Gribbell estate and was then owned by George, Warner and Morgan Lear. The Court of Common Pleas awarded the Lear family \$24,875 for the property. The war delayed construction so the land, which had a house, garage and chicken coop, was rented to Mr. Stephen J. Walsh. In 1947 additional land, adjoining the land previously acquired from the Lear family, was purchased from the estate of the late Frank Schoble. On September 15, 1948, the new Wyncote School opened, addition was made in 1969.

The old Wyncote School was used for some years by the Philadelphia-Montgomery Christian School and then later by the Alternative East High School. This served students from Cheltenham, Abington, Springfield and Philadelphia high schools. This building now serves as an office.



ELLA RANDALL

First teacher at the LaMott School 1868



FLORENCE RIDPATH

First teacher at the Wyncote School 1884

In September of 1902 the grammar division of the Audenried School had been transferred to the Edge Hill School. Now with the aging facilities of the Audenried School and the crowded conditions of the Edge Hill School, it was apparent a new school was needed in the Glenside area. On October 11, 1907, the school district purchased land from George and Eleanor Heist, Jr. This small piece of land, slightly over an acre, was located on Easton Road just north of Springhouse Lane and cost \$4,000. Anticipating the opening of the new Glenside School in September 1908, the Audenried School was closed in June. Unfortunately construction problems developed necessitating the children to attend classes in the Glenside Baptist Church at Easton Road and Wesley Avenue until the Glenside School was completed in September a year later. The School Board had previously used the church in September 1906 for 1st and 2nd graders from the overcrowded Edge Hill School.

The new Glenside School opened with a manual training room for boys from Glenside, Edge Hill and Wyncote Schools. The girls from the same schools were given sewing while the boys had their manual training. The other district grammar schools had their own manual training facilities. Edge Hill and Wyncote Schools were to have their own facilities within a few years. In 1912 four classrooms, a large room for teachers or library purposes and a new manual training room was added to the original Glenside building. In 1924 additional land, to expand the play area, was purchased from Clarence and Beulah Shilcock for \$9,000.

The school served the community for 48 years before it closed its doors in June 1956. It was briefly used by the Oak Lane Country Day School and eventually demolished to make way for a gas station.

The post war movement to the suburbs necessitated land being bought to construct a new Glenside School. The 13 acre plot, at Limekiln Pike and Harrison Avenue, was purchased from Thomas and Marie Kenworthy for \$37,500. Having purchased the land on December 29, 1952, the School Board proceeded with construction and the second Glenside School opened September 10, 1956.

Until 1901 children were allowed to enter 1st grade on the very day they became six-years-old. With the increasing primary level population, not to mention the educational problems in such

a program, the School Board changed the entrance policy at its December 2, 1901, meeting. Henceforth, children could only enter at the beginning of school in September or on the first Monday of February.

In 1907 the State Department of Public Instruction inaugurated a system of evaluation for all Commonwealth school districts. Cheltenham's first visit was made by state inspector C.D. Koch in December 1911. Among Mr. Koch's many commendable remarks he said, "he had never been in a school whose management and conduct were superior to that of Cheltenham High School." He also paid high praise to the work being done in the elementary schools.

The 1906 high school building was to be used in that capacity for only 20 years, but during that time Cheltenham School District established itself as an excellent system and one that would attract families to the community.

In 1913 the excellent academic, commercial and industrial arts programs and facilities were to be joined by a new athletic facility. On September 8, 1911, the district purchased 5 acres of land behind the high school from Jane Thomson for \$12,000. Prior to this Cheltenham had for some years been participating in major sporting activities with other schools but lacked its own facilities except for a baseball field. When the new grounds opened in 1913 the district also made it available to all township residents during July and August. A supervisor was employed to conduct a recreational program for the local citizens of all ages. The official opening was May 10, 1913. It was celebrated by holding an interscholastic track meet followed by a Cheltenham-Jenkintown baseball game.

In December of 1914 the Athletic Association voted to include funding for girl's athletic teams. Miss Chauveau, of Jenkintown, was asked to coach the hockey team. Plans were also made to add basketball and tennis.

By December of 1917 the First World War was having an affect on the Philadelphia job market. There was a

shortage of trained office personnel, so a night school was opened in Cheltenham High School with an emphasis on those skills necessary for office employment.

In 1918 the physical education program was extended to the elementary grades. Senior girls in the physical training course at the Beechwood School in Jenkintown taught classes in all the district's grammar schools.

During the First World War, the increased population of the Cheltenham Village area necessitated another elementary school be built. The crowded conditions at the Heller School had been described as "discouraging" by Superintendent William Cleaver in his 1913 report. Two rooms in Mr. Fullam's house at 505 Ryers Avenue in Cheltenham Village were rented as primary classrooms. An acre of land was purchased on July 15, 1914, from John Milroy for \$6,000 and the Thomas Rowland School was opened on September 7, 1915, at Myrtle and Elm Avenues.

Thomas Rowland was a descendent of Benjamin Rowland one of the three men who built the Milltown School in 1795. He was also a member of the School Board and the first postmaster of the Cheltenham Post Office in 1857.

Additions were made to the building in 1918 and 1964. With the decreasing school population of the 1970's it was closed in June 1977. The building was taken over by the township and is now the Rowland Community Center.

In February 11, 1922, the district purchased .8 acres of land from C. Wilhelmina Dobbins for \$20,260. The Benjamin R. Myers School, built on this Montgomery Avenue site, was dedicated on September 8, 1923. In 1967 a major addition was made to the building. Benjamin R. Myers, a life long resident of Cheltenham, was president of the School Board when they organized the first high school.

During the 1920's and 30's Cheltenham School District was to make tremendous strides in curriculum development and obtain national recognition. These changes were carried out mainly under the leadership of superintendents O.W. Ackerman and Albert L. Rowland, high school principal I.R. Kraybill and director of elementary education Jessie Dotterer. The appointment of Jessie Dotterer as supervisor of elementary grades in 1922 and her reassignment as Director of Elementary Education in 1927 showed the importance placed by the district on the children's early years in school.

*In* 1922 the first serious kindergarten program was begun in the Edge Hill School. Its success led to kindergartens being established in the other schools during the next few years. This was not the first kindergarten program in Cheltenham's schools. In March of 1909, at the request of local parents, a kindergarten program had begun at the Wyncote School. The district supplied a room and employed a teacher, Miss Angie Grieb, but all expenses, including the teacher's salary, were paid by the parents. School district records do not indicate more of this early venture into a kindergarten program or how long it continued. When the Glenside School opened in September 1908 a privately operated kindergarten was held in the building's vacant room. Miss Taylor, of Doylestown, was the teacher in charge.

In 1921, at the NEA Convention in Atlantic City, the National Honor Society was founded by a group of school principals. The Cheltenham chapter was quickly established during the 1921-22 school year with its 10 charter members -- Richard Bowers, Edith Rooks, Randolph Church, John Donal, Esther MacNeir, Fred Roedelheim, Walter Schilipp, Wellington Snyder, Alexander Sutherland and Louise Weyl. The charter was officially approved by the National Council on March 8, 1923, and was the 90th charter in the nation.

In the 1923-24 school year the Student Council had been organized and in the 1924-25 school year the Student Government and the Social Service Club were begun. In the fall of 1924 the high school principal, Ira Kraybill, introduced the idea of "parents night" for the purpose of bringing each student, teacher and parent into closer contact.

The first class to take an extended senior trip was the class of 1926. The 65 member class and 5 chaperones took a 3 day trip to Washington D.C. They travelled by train and stayed at the Hotel Driscoll.





George K. Heller School  
1883-1953



Thomas Rowland School  
1915-1977

The Cheltenham Plan of Instruction, the local adaptation of the Dalton Plan, began in 1927. Its purpose was to develop greater pupil motivation by means of a higher degree of individualization in the teaching.

The secondary school was also developing a more individualized approach and strengthening of the non-academic areas of the curriculum. The industrial arts program was greatly expanded to include print, wood and metal shops. Since Cheltenham was the first high school in Pennsylvania to establish an industrial arts department, it was to be expected that they would approach the expansion of this program with the same determination that they approached the improvement of the academic programs. In 1927 a co-operative program was developed with local companies to give the students some practical training in industry.

In 1926 Margaret MacDonald was appointed high school guidance counselor. She was the first to hold this position in the high schools of the suburban counties.

At the 1926 Thanksgiving Day football game, Cheltenham High School's first uniformed band made its premiere appearance. In 1928 a uniformed drum-major led the band.

During the 1928-29 school year the high school magazine "El Delator" became a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association and entered the nationwide contest. The quality of Cheltenham's program was once again shown when in its first year of membership the magazine was awarded third place in this nationwide competition. In the next few years the magazine placed second several times and then was awarded first place honors.

In 1930 Cheltenham High School was one of 55 American high schools to participate with 55 English high schools in a comparative study of secondary education in both countries. Cheltenham was paired with the Beckenham County School in Kent, England.

In 1931 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted an experiment known as the Pennsylvania Study. Cheltenham was one of 10 Pennsylvania public schools that participated with a group of private schools. Each school provided a continuity of teaching staff throughout the high school years for a control group of students. To evaluate their progress, tests were periodically given in several subject areas. The superintendent's report of 1933 stated that the early results showed the median Cheltenham scores "considerably higher" than the median of all other schools involved.

In that same year Cheltenham was selected by the Progressive Education Association as one of 3 Pennsylvania schools to participate in a nationwide experiment with many of the same purposes as the Carnegie Study.

During the 1920's a junior high school and a new senior high school were built and a major district-wide reorganization took place. On September 8, 1926, the new high school opened its doors on what had been the athletic field behind the 1906 high school. Original plans called for the new school to be built in front of the old one, but Harrisburg authorities felt it would be too close to the Elkins Park Train Station. To replace the lost athletic facilities, 8 acres of land on the other side of High School Road were purchased for \$45,000 on March 1, 1925, from Miss Jane Thomson.

At the February School Board meeting in 1927, Dr. Rowland's plan to reorganize the district was accepted. The elementary schools would be grades K-6 and 2 new junior highs would be built for grades 7-9. One was to be in Wyncote and the other in the Cheltenham area. On December 31, 1925, 9 acres of land on Hewett Road in Wyncote were purchased from William and Alice Caveny. On July 14, 1928, 10 acres at Ashbourne Road and Front Street were purchased from Mary Haines for \$42,500. Stone was cut in the quarry behind the Hewett Road site to build both schools. It was stored on the Ashbourne Road site and work began on the Wyncote site immediately.

On September 10, 1928, the Thomas opened in Wyncote. It was named in honor of a member whose father was also a School Board member and whose great-grandfather's will gave the land for the 1793 school on Cheltenham Avenue. The new T-W Junior High, as it was locally called, remained in use until the Cedarbrook Junior High opened in September 1970.

The second junior high was not built at this time, but the 1906 high school building was referred to as the junior division of the high school. On April 21, 1933, the name was officially changed to the Elkins Park Junior High School.

During the 1930's the Depression had its effect on the district. Several of the elementary schools were used as distribution centers for clothing to needy families. Economy measures were taken, but the School Board made every effort to maintain the buildings and the academic programs. Tax receipts declined and the millage was reduced by 1 mill. As evidence of Cheltenham's long standing regard for the value of a good education, several of the district's P.T.A. 's sent letters to the Board asking that whatever money-saving steps would be taken, the district's high educational standards be maintained and that there be no staff reduction or increase in class size. There was no staff reduction though at the April 11,1933 School Board meeting professional staff salaries were reduced by 12%. Ten days later the motion

was changed to no more than 10% below the Edmond's Act. The cut went into effect for the 1933-34 year. On May 7,1935, the School Board re-established the old salary schedule for the 1935-36 year. Staff was paid 90% of the increment called for in the schedule and about 17% of the money lost during the past 2 years.

In 1937 a new separate high school gymnasium was constructed between the 1906 and 1926 buildings, as part of a WPA project.

In June 1939 a request was made to use the high school facilities for an Adult School, which today is an important part of the total educational opportunity offered Cheltenham's residents of all ages. Originally high school students were not allowed to participate in Adult School programs but in later years this restriction was rescinded.

Traditionally, high school athletics depended on gate receipts and the selling of student tickets. The gate receipts of the "big game" was the major source of income. In Cheltenham that meant the Thanksgiving Day game at Temple Stadium with Abington High School. As the game grew so did its problems – betting.

The out of township residents making it more than a local high school game and competition between schools over the selling of tickets. This latter point became a serious problem. Since the proceeds of the game were divided equally between the 2 athletic funds, pressure was put on the students to sell more tickets. With Abington being a much larger district Cheltenham students had difficulty in matching its ticket sales and this sometimes led to unpleasant feelings. Dr. Kraybill, Cheltenham High School principal, felt this arrangement was not in the best interest of the students and that all student activities had a contribution to make in the total educational program. He approached the School Board with the idea that if a school's athletic program served an educational purpose then it should be maintained in the same way as the rest of the school's programs. The School Board saw the wisdom of his thinking and at a special meeting on September 20,1943, decided that athletics are part of the school district's total educational program and no admission would be charged for home athletic events. For the next 35 years this was the policy of the district until 1978 when it was decided to charge for football, basketball and wrestling events.

During the Depression years the school district enrollment increased by less than 200 pupils. With fewer young families moving during that period, most of the increase was at the secondary level. Because of this changing pattern the Committee on Attendance made the following recommendations at the December 1, 1939, School Board meeting: (1) close Edge Hill School; (2) close LaMott School; (3) build a new junior high in the Cheltenham area; (4) acquire land in the same area for an elementary school to replace the Heller School; (5) build a new Wyncote Elementary School. The Board adopted the plan in May of 1940, and the 2 older elementary schools were closed the following month.

School activities during the Second World War were curtailed, and money raising programs were directed towards the war effort. Cheltenham did well in all the War Bond drives, but in the Sixth War Bond Drive, they exceeded all other high schools in the county when they raised \$240,248.40. Between 1941 and 1945 Cheltenham High School raised, through War Bonds and Saving Stamp sales, \$1,019,723.41 besides raising

\$50,000 to buy a P-51 Mustang fighter plane and money for other pieces of military equipment. During the war years 1,508 Cheltenham graduates served their country and 33 made the supreme sacrifice. Five of the high school faculty members enlisted in the service as well.

Also during the war, school district facilities were used for Civilian Defense and Rationing Board activities. Nearly all buildings were used by some unit of the Air Raid Wardens, Auxiliary Firemen and Disaster Units. On one occasion an Army Unit was passing through Cheltenham and needed to stop for the night. The soldiers were put up in the high school gymnasium and the senior class held a dance for them. An observation post of the Aircraft Warning Service was maintained on the roof of the Rowland School. Several of the Rowland teachers served at this post after their teaching hours. The Cheltenham Township Rationing Board and Auxiliary Police used the high school gymnasium building as permanent headquarters.

After the war, families again became very mobile and the move to the suburbs began. While the movement began slowly during the first 5 years after the war, most of the new families were young, and there was an immediate effect on the elementary school population. The real growth came in the 1950's. The decade began with a school district enrollment of 3,418 and by 1960 it had grown to 6,304. During this same period the total township population increased by over 13,000.

After the war the district began to complete the recommendations made in 1939 that had been postponed because of the war. The new plans also took into consideration the rapidly increasing population. As previously mentioned the Wyncote School opened September 15, 1948, and the Glenside School, September 10, 1956.

On May 19, 1950, nearly 6 1/2 acres were bought from Harry and Sadie Robinson for \$19,000. This property at Washington Lane and Ashbourne Road was the major part of the Lynnewood School which opened February 25, 1952. Plans had originally called for Lynnewood to be opened in September of 1951 but construction was behind schedule. Therefore, when school opened on September 6, 1951, the Wyncote School was shared by the pupils and staffs of Wyncote and Lynnewood. Wyncote used the building from 8:15 to 12:15 and the Lynnewood School from 12:30 to 4:30. Since the number of kindergarten children assigned to Lynnewood required four sections, and Wyncote only had enough room to accommodate its own kindergarten children, it was necessary to postpone the opening of kindergarten for the Lynnewood children until their new school was completed.

It was on this Lynnewood site that the Cheltenham Military Academy had begun in 1872. In 1972, while principal of Lynnewood School, I located in the crawl space under the school the ruins of one of the Academy's 3 buildings. The high school archaeology class began a 4 year project which was to unearth numerous artifacts as well as several rooms of the building. In 1979 I identified the ruins of a second building when part of the front lawn was being dug-up to install new pipes for a sprinkler system.

On March 27, 1953, the Cheltenham Elementary School was opened at Front Street and Ashbourne Road. This land had been purchased in 1928 to build the junior high school Dr. Rowland had recommended for the Cheltenham area of the township.

With the increasing elementary population it was only a matter of time before the effects would be felt at the secondary level. On December 28th and 31st of 1951 3 separate purchases of land were made at New Second Street and Kingston Road on what had been the Idro Farm tract of the John B. Stetson family. The 3 purchases totaled \$55,000. On November 1, 1954, a new Elkins Park Junior High School opened on this site. The old Elkins Park School became the administration building.

The next school level to be affected was the 1926 high school facility. During the 1950's 4 buildings served the needs of the high school students. These buildings were the main 1926 high school, the 1937 gymnasium, the 1951 industrial arts building and 14 rooms plus a study hall in the 1906 high school/administration building. While this campus type school had some advantages, the disadvantages were apparent during inclement weather.

The School Board worked with a Citizens Advisory Committee on what steps should be taken to plan for the post war baby boom when it reached the high school. It very quickly became obvious that a new high school was needed, so on May 4, 1956, the district acquired the Endsmeet Farm in Wyncote from Anna Wharton Morris for approximately \$250,000. Ground was broken on June 25, 1957, and the cornerstone laid on May 17, 1959. On September 8, 1959, the new high school and athletic field opened on Rices Mill Road. Open House was held on October 17th and 18th and the official dedication of the building on October 21, 1959. The 51 acre site, building and equipment cost \$6,400,000. The 1926 high school building became the Ogontz Junior High School, now making 3 junior highs in the district.

Thomas Williams Junior High was the smallest of the 3 junior highs and plans were made for the construction of what would be the last school of the post war boom. On May 13, 1966, 11 acres were purchased along Limekiln pike in Wyncote from Charles and Lillian Lazrow for \$190,000. The new Cedarbrook Junior High School opened September 9, 1970. The old T-W was torn down and the area is now used by the township recreational department.

During the 1960's many changes took place in American society, and education was no exception. Some students began looking for a form of education other than the regular school program. To meet this need 2 Alternative High Schools were opened in the greater Philadelphia area. Alternative East opened September 1971 at St. Joseph's Hall on Ashbourne Road across the street from the Lynnewood School. Abington, Cheltenham, Springfield and Philadelphia sent students to this school. The school was later moved to the old Wyncote School building on Greenwood Avenue and is now housed in Springfield Township.

In 1979 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania directed all school districts to develop a program for students identified as being in the gifted range of ability. This type of program was not new to Cheltenham. It was in 1934 that Dr. Herman Wessell, principal of Elkins Park Junior High School, developed such a program. He later served as president of the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Children.

The year 1970 was the high water mark of the township (40,238) and the school district's (6,866) population. Just as the rapid pupil increase of the 1950's had a tremendous effect on the district, so did the just as rapid decrease of the 1970's have its effect. The young families of the post war era were

now older but remaining in the township. With little space for new housing this meant a limited opportunity for new young couples to move to Cheltenham. This coupled with the nation-wide decreasing birth rate was to cause a nearly 2,500 pupil decrease.

The Shoemaker School was the first to feel the effect when it closed in June 1973. Then on November 25, 1974, the School Board officially adopted the plan of Superintendent John Thorson to handle this changing population. The plan called for the closing of the Rowland and Lynnewood Schools as well as the Ogontz Junior High. The remaining four elementary schools were to be for grades K-5 and the junior highs would now be middle schools for grades 6-8. The high school would return to a four year program.

Two years were allowed to prepare for the implementation of this major reorganization. New attendance areas were drawn-up and the arrangements for new staff assignments were developed. The closing of Ogontz was moved up a year to June 1976. Both Rowland and Lynnewood closed June 1977. The Ogontz building and administration building were bought by Beth Jacob School. Rowland became a community center and Lynnewood the new administration building.

Beginning with the 1982-83 school year Cheltenham again assumed the leadership position in an educational program when it began an all day kindergarten program. New staff was hired for the 10 classes in the 4 elementary schools.

In the 5 years following the implementation of Dr. Thorson's plan, there were yearly decreases in the professional and business staffs. By 1982 there were signs of a slowing in the downward population at the elementary level where the effects were first felt 12 years earlier. As a matter of fact, by the end of 1983 there were signs of a changing housing pattern and a slight increase of preschool age children.

As the Cheltenham schools look ahead 12 years to the beginning of their third century, one thing remains constant. Just as the education of its children was paramount in the thinking of its citizens when they opened the Milltown School in 1795 and when they planned the first high school in 1884, so it is in 1983. Cheltenham will always strive to maintain the place it has long held in the front ranks of educational progress.

The history of education in Cheltenham Township would not be complete without some mention of the private schools that flourished in Cheltenham's educationally fertile environment. The three most prominent schools - Cheltenham Military Academy, Cheltenham Hills School and Ogontz School for Girls - all began in the last half of the nineteenth century. Cheltenham had not yet established its high school program and many of the more affluent families were looking for a school that would prepare their children for higher education.

Shortly after the civil War, Jay Cooke and Robert Shoemaker spoke to Dr. Edward Appleton, Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Old York Road, about the need for a school in the area. In 1871 the Rev. Samuel Clements began what was to be the nationally known Cheltenham Military Academy. It was first located in the old Shoemaker mansion "Ivy Green" which stood in the area of Church and Old York Roads. The following year, on July 1, 1872, the Rev. Clements purchased land at Washington Lane and Ashbourne Road from the estate of the late Gabriella Butler. She was the widow of Col. John Butler and the sister-in-law of the famous British actress, Fanny Kemble. The Rev. Clements continued as the school's director until his death in 1889 and was succeeded by Calvin Rice. Shortly before the First World War the property was bought by P.A.B. Widener. He had the main residence torn down and converted Norwood Hall into a laundry and Clemens Hall into a garage. These two buildings were torn down when the Lynnewood School was built on the site. It was the ruins of the main residence which this writer discovered under Lynnewood School in 1972 and the ruins of Clemens Hall in 1979 while excavation was underway to install new water pipes.

As a nationally recognized military academy it attracted many prominent local families as well as families from other areas. The two most famous students were Jesse Grant, whose father President Grant, enrolled him in 1873, and the poet Ezra Pound who was a local Wyncote resident and enrolled in 1897. In 1895

C.M.A.'s track team helped make sports history. The first relay meet held anywhere in the world was the Penn Relays in 1895. Cheltenham Military Academy's mile relay team was one of four school winners that day.

In 1857 the Heacock family began the Cheltenham Hills School which was attended by the children of local Cheltenham, Jenkintown and Abington families. Except for 3 pictures of the students, taken in 1857, there is no record of the early years of the school which was discontinued with the coming of the civil War. The Heacocks were "ardent Abolitionists and after the civil War the sisters, who were trained teachers, went south to teach black children. Some went to Port Royal Island, South Carolina and others to an orphan's home for black children in Washington D.C. Meanwhile, their brother, State Senator Joseph Heacock, had married Elizabeth Walker who had also been a teacher. In 1878 she was urged to reopen the Cheltenham Hills School by some prominent Philadelphia businessmen who "built country residences in the Cheltenham Hills area. It was to have boarding pupils from as far away as Johnstown and day pupils who walked, rode horseback or came by train. School was first held in the east end of the old Heacock homestead on the second floor. In 1881 a new house, "Netherhouse", was built facing Glenside Avenue. These better facilities brought an immediate increase in the student body. In 1892 a new building, entirely devoted to school purposes, was built on Heacock Lane and the pupils now numbered 120. That building still stands as a private dwelling on Heacock Lane. The Cheltenham Hills School had a full program including field trips. The most memorable trip was to Washington D.C. where the students met President Grover Cleveland. As the Cheltenham School system grew and its curriculum expanded, interest in the local private schools waned. The Cheltenham Hills School closed in 1912.

Persuaded by Jay Cooke, the Chestnut Street Female Seminary of Philadelphia in 1883 moved to his mansion, "Ogontz", at Washington Lane and Ashbourne Road. This was directly across the street from the Cheltenham Military Academy. The new name of the school was the Ogontz School for Girls. The use of



the mansion was given without any financial responsibility on the part of the school or its directors Mary L. Bonney and Harriet A. Dillaye. In 1912, the school was bought by Abby A. Sutherland, who was at that time the headmistress. In 1916 she sold the property in Cheltenham and moved to Abington and in 1950 the land was deeded to Penn State University, and became part of the present Penn State Ogontz campus.



Cheltenham Military Academy

1872



Cheltenham Hills School

1892

There were several other private schools that began in Cheltenham. One of the first of this group was the Waverly Select School which started during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was founded by Philip J. Wunderle and John Wilson in Glenside near Waverly Road as a small elementary school for children in the Edge Hill area who lived too far to walk to the Audenried School. It was discontinued in 1890 when the Edge School was opened.

Little is known of the Marshall Seminary for Girls but it opened in the mid 1890's and continued 10 years or so after. It was located on T. Henry Asbury's estate near what today would be Mountain Avenue and Valley Road. Emma and Mary Marshall operated it as a boarding and day school for girls.

The Oak Lane Day School was founded in 1916 by a group of local parents. It was located on Oak Lane Road below Ashbourne Road and consisted of a 3 year nursery school with successive grades through the secondary level. In 1931, it became affiliated with the Teachers' College of Temple University where new methods of teaching could be practiced. It was here that this writer did his student teaching at the elementary level. After almost a 25 year affiliation with Temple the school became independent and first moved to the closed Glenside School on Easton Road and then to a site outside of Cheltenham Township.

Jay Cooke and John Thomas began a boarding and day school for \_ girls on the 20 acres of land on Ashbourne Road which was later to be purchased by P.A.B. Widener. The school where both Cooke and Thomas sent their daughters, was run by Rachel Carr. The peak enrollment for the school was 28 boarders and 15 day pupils. In time the school moved to "Eildon" the home of Charles Barney, Jay Cooke's son-in-law, and was finally discontinued in 1878.

Cheltenham Township presently has 8 full-time religious schools operating within its borders. There are 3 parish schools: St. James School, established in 1923 at 8310 Brookside Road in Elkins Park; Presentation BVM School, established in 1926 at 107 Old Soldiers Road in Cheltenham; St. Joseph School, established in 1955 at 7633 Waters Road in Cheltenham.

Melrose Academy is both an elementary and high school at 7601 Old York Road. The land had been part of Richard J. Dobbins' estate and the mansion was called "Eilerslie." It is run by the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart.

Another private school was begun on the George Lorimer estate and mansion "Belgrave" at 2025 Church Road in 1945. Ancillae Academy began as a girls school and in 1957 became Ancillae-Assumpta Academy when the boys school opened.

Bishop McDevitt High School is operated by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It opened in 1959 at Royal Avenue and Mulford Road in Wyncote.

The Beth Jacob School was established in 1890 in Philadelphia and in the 1970's moved to the closed Shoemaker School on Church Road. Then, in 1977, they purchased the newly closed 1906 and 1926 high school buildings at Montgomery Avenue and High School Road.

The Forman Hebrew Day School began at Old York and Foxcroft Roads in 1973. It has a program from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Nursery programs are provided at All Hallows Church Nursery School, Bent Road and Greenwood Avenue in Wyncote; Waverly Children's House presently rents space in the Glenside Elementary School.

Cheltenham Township also has 4 institutions of higher learning. Beaver College began as the Beaver Female Seminary in 1853 at Beaver, Pennsylvania. In 1872 the name was changed to Beaver College and Musical Institute. Though it continued a music program until the 1960's the name Musical Institute was dropped in 1903.

In 1925 the college was moved to Jenkintown and occupied the old Beechwood School which stood on the site now used by the Beaver Hill Condominiums. Then in 1929 they purchased the Harrison estate "Grey Towers" in Glenside for \$712,500. For a number of years classes were held at both the Jenkintown and

Glenside campuses but in 1962 Beaver College transferred completely to the Grey Towers property. Ten years later Beaver became co-educational as it had been between the years 1872 and 1907.

The Tyler School of Fine Arts at Penrose and Beech Avenues is associated with Temple University. It was established as a result of Mrs. Stella Elkins Tyler's gift in 1932.

Westminster Theological Seminary, which is Presbyterian, began in 1929 and moved to its present site, Church Road and Willow Grove Avenue, in 1937.

Dr. Carl McIntire established the Faith Theological Seminary in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1937. In 1952 he purchased the Widener estate on Ashbourne Road as the seminary's new home.

With its nearly 8 square miles Cheltenham Township may be the smallest township in Montgomery County, but with its long history of educational excellence, it stands in the forefront not only in Montgomery County but also Pennsylvania.