

Timeline Overview of Charlton Schools

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Presented by Cindy Cooper and Kevinetta O'Brien on July 27, 2005

1642 MA General Court instructed selectmen of the towns to direct parents to teach their children and understand the religious principals of the colonies.

1647 Every town with a population of 50 or more families must appoint a schoolmaster to teach reading and writing, and with a population of 100 or more families to establish a grammar school, where boys were sent after they could read and write and where the subjects were classical and moral.

3/27/1755 Warrant article "To make such a grant of money as the district may think necessary, for the schooling of the children." with 8 pounds voted for that purpose. There were schools in two places.

1756 schools in three places, with no money voted for summer school

1757 Gore added to the district, so funding increased and a school committee was formed. They voted to have each part provide its own schoolhouse, and the committee would provide schooling as each part chose.

1760 six schoolhouses and six districts: #1 West (called Rum Hill), #2 Middle, #3 East, #4 Northeast, #5 North, #6 Northeast

1761-Town Book, Vol. I pg 58 records the findings of "the committee of men to state places for to build school houses in ye several parts of ye district" as follows:

"1st It is agreed upon and voted that the school hous in the southwest part of the district shall stand in the place where it is built. Voted and accepted of all ye places appointed by the committee to build schoolhouses on-which is as followeth

2nd It is agreed that ye school house in the southwest part of the district shall stand on the north part of Ebenezer Fosketts on ye road that ledes to Mr Lambs on the nearest convenient place.

3rd It is agreed that the schoolhouse for the northeast part of the district shall stand on ye east sid of the Sawmill Brook near Mr. Jonathan Wheelock's-near a black oke tree.

4th it is agreed that the school house for ye northwest part of ye district shall stand south of Mr. Henry Merit's-near a brook.

5th it is agreed that ye school house in ye west part in the middle collom of ye district shall stand on a hill north of a swamp called may Blobe Swamp Near a path that is trod from Joseph Clements to ye narrows

6th it is agreed that ye school house for ye east part in ye middle colum of ye district shall stand on ye est side of a swamp that lyes est of Joseph Laflins on ye road.

1766 eight schoolhouses: Middle Ward was Charlton Center with the schoolhouse at the southwest corner of the burying ground. Early places for schools were centrally located, but useless, such as the triangle where roads meet.

1780 10 districts: Middle (Center), North, Chestnut Hill, South (Dresser Hill), Rum Hill (West), Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, Northeast, and East.

1786 changed from committeemen for the whole town to Prudential Committees for each district's school. The money came from within the district. Committee regulated schools for each ward, and selected places to put a school for each ward without a building. For many years each ward provided their own schoolhouse and the tax money for schools was divided among the wards in proportion to the taxes paid by each, effectively meaning the wards paid for their own schools.

MA law in 1789 "...allowed a town to break itself up into separate school districts, each run by its own district committee." These later developed into the Prudential Committees.

1794 Proceeding of March Town Meeting: "Voted to raise two hundred pounds for the support of the Schools the present year. Voted Each School have a right to take out of their part of School money to enable them to furnish said Schools with fire wood."

1795 13 districts: Mill District at Dodge formed from Northeast, City Ward (later #13), and Amasa Davis Ward (later #7).

1797 Captain Levi Davis Ward formed (later #2)

10/20/1806 from records found in assessors office: "To the Selectmen of Charlton, the following is a list of the School Money proportioned to the several school wards in Charlton as follows (viz) for 1806: North Ward-\$48.02; Centre Ward-146.07; East Ward-71.72; Levi Davis_-77.58;N East Ward-6288; Mill Ward-6107; South Ward-80.47; South West_-8654; Amosa Davis_-5898; South East_-4145; Rum Hill_-6256; Chestnut Hill_-7206; City Ward-5603; North West-9327. "

1816 the town boundaries changed to form Southbridge, resulting in the loss of Southwest Ward and Rum Hill Ward.

1819 a committee of 12 men was chosen to establish school districts and highway bounds. They reported the location of 14 schools. Soon thereafter, the division of the Center into 2 districts made a total of fifteen, the highest recorded number.

MA Board of Education was established in 1837.

1836 Reduced the number of districts to 13. The old #3 (on Smith Road) was consolidated with #4, the Millward, which was above the gorge of Little River at Dodge Bridge, south of the entrance road to the former Town Farm. Shortly thereafter, the stone schoolhouse was built at Hammond Hill Road and Stafford St. Clara Barton taught at the stone school in 1841. All other schools were wooden.

In 1838 the state required school committees to prepare an annual report to be read at the annual town meeting, with a copy sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, or lose state funding.

1854 Tax money earmarked for schools is equally divided among the wards, rather than based on the amount of taxes paid by the inhabitants of the ward.

1858 A high school containing two rooms was built.

1862 School Committee report, "The law requiring the support of at least 6 months in each year of a sufficient number of schools has been complied with, although the aggregate expense has considerably exceeded the amount appropriated by the town."

1869 Changed the system to the town owning the schoolhouses, with 30 weeks of school per year. SC Report: "Graded schools might be established without any additional expense. At the last annual town meeting it was voted to extend the school sessions to thirty weeks, in order that an additional term might be secured, thus making the spring and fall terms nine weeks, and the winter term twelve weeks, as usual."

1871, Nov. 15, sold old Dist #4 Schoolhouse for \$50.

June 1, 1873 town received \$100 from Erastus Winslow for removing schoolhouse (Note: A map shows E. Winslow lived in house at Sampson/Rt. 20, so the #10 was relatively close to him, and may have been the one he purchased).

1877 School Committee Report for year ending March 5, 1877: "We now support thirteen schools seven and one half months in the year, and if a change could be made by merging two schools into one, or in some other way reducing the number of schools from thirteen to nine, it would be a saving to the town annually of seven hundred and eighty dollars, allowing only twenty-six dollars per month for the cost of each school, and the schools would be more profitable to the pupils and easier for the teachers."

1888 MA legislature established district-type Superintendent of Schools for towns under a certain valuation and number of schools.

1889 Charlton News, May 16- "At the recent town meeting it was voted to accept the lot laid out by selectmen in District No. 7 (Dresser Hill) on which a school house will soon be built. This lot is just above the old school house. On the lot is a very old house which has been occupied by many different families. Some fifty years ago the family of Nelson Towne, occupied it. The town also voted to accept the lot in No. 9, laid out by the selectmen. This lot is near the house of Reuben C. Brown, containing about one and one-half acres. A school house is to be built on this lot also, this season. These houses are to cost \$1,000."

1892 Sturbridge, Charlton, and West Brookfield formed a superintendency union with Edward Dixon in charge.

1893 Town Meeting warrant article, “to see if the town will vote to have the new and confusing style of teaching prohibited, and to have all the teachers teach the letters, syllables, and multiplication tables.”

1899 state required 32-week sessions. Both men and women receive the same salary. New schools were built in districts 4,7, 9, 11, and 12 before the turn of the century.

1900 the new two-room City school was built for \$2,670, with students from districts 8, 9, and 10 to be transported there also.

1902 Superintendency changed to a Leicester-Charlton union. The superintendent recommended only six schools: grade school at Center and City, 2 schools in north, and 2 schools in south, to save money and give students a better education.

1903-04 annual report: A joint meeting of Charlton and Leicester chose Wallace Mason as Superintendent again. There were 14 schoolhouses, but only 13 were in use.

1904-05 Superintendent strongly supports Charlton having its own high school and uses the financial benefit as the reason.

1905 The town voted in favor of a high school and appropriated money to support it. Municipal offices moved to the current library. The HS takes the place of the municipal offices on the second floor, with the District 1 school remaining on the first floor.

1910 Primary grades were consolidated at the Center School, with other elementary grades remaining in the districts.

1921 Mr. Kenneth Tyler became HS principal. He reported that the high school enrollment had increased so much that some of the classes had to be held in the Universalist Church, and pupils were obliged to travel from one building to another.

1922 the high school was destroyed by fire, and classes were held in the basement of the town hall (now the library).

1923 New Center School built after the old one burned in 1922. Building housed students in grades 1-12, with elementary grades all in one room.

1923 a fire destroyed St. Joseph’s church and damaged City Grade next door. The school was renovated after the fire.

1923 Leicester reached high valuation beyond a joint superintendency. New union formed consisting of Charlton, Sturbridge, and Holland, with Loring Williams as Superintendent.

1926 To relieve overcrowding transferred first 6 grades to the town hall (now library) basement, with two teachers. Continued to use town hall basement as needed for classes until 1969.

1928 reorganized to 6 elementary and 6 secondary grades, bringing all districts' grades 7 and 8 to the high school.

1929 voted to increase the number of classrooms at City Grade, which resulted in closing #13 and #11.

1934 each of 6 grades at City Grade have a separate room, and Dist. 12 school closed, with students going to City Grade.

1937 additional rooms added to City Grade, with students of #9 going there. #2 and #4 limited to 3 grades each. In "mud season" the school closed for one week in March.

1940 #7 (Dresser Hill) closed.

1945 electric lights installed in #2 and #6. Water pump added to #2.

1948 voted to add 2 wings to the high school, and grades 4-6 at Center

1949 Addition wings built on high school. #2, 4, and 6 closed at Christmas vacation and classes began in the new wing in Jan. 1950. These were the last district schools to close.

1951 first teacher's salary schedule.

1955 double sessions due to overcrowding at City and Center.

Burlingame Road Elementary School recommended by the Building Planning Committee is voted at a special town meeting on Jan. 29, 1955.

1958 Burlingame Road Elementary School opened for grades 3-6.

1963 Charlton, Sturbridge, Holland union discontinued. Charlton had its own superintendent, Robert Ewing.

The Charlton School Committee has asked permission of the Department of Public Safety for permission to use the federated Church classrooms for the school year 1968-1969 in order to avoid double sessions.

1969 more double sessions. Middle school for grades 5-8 started and Kindergarten opened.

1970 town voted to form Dudley-Charlton regional district for grades K-12.

1972 Charlton schools were absorbed into the regional system with the opening of Shepherd Hill Jr.-Sr. High School, located in Dudley. The old High School became the middle school for grades 4-6

1973-1989 City Grade is used only for third grade.

In the Fall of 1989 Heritage School opened for grades 3-6, replacing the Center and City Grade Schools, with Burlingame Road school used for grades K-2. The dedication ceremony was held on 10/22/1989.

Charlton Middle School, for children in grades 5 to 8, was dedicated on 1/7/2001. Shepherd Hill was reconfigured to provide for students in grades 9 to 12, Heritage School was used for grades 2 through 4, and Charlton Elementary on Burlingame Road was used for Pre-Kindergarten through grade 1.

2003 City Grade School demolished to make way for a gas station/convenience store.

Sources

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