



BUILDING JUNIOR NO. 1

1914-1916, In the midst of the Great War

The Junior High School Concept

Prior to 1916 Trenton's school system consisted of many elementary schools of eight grades and a single high school of four grades. In 1906 manual training was introduced in the high school. Its importance was correlating the training of the hand with that of the mind and it was thought that the training given by the old-fashioned household chores had been lost. Sewing was added in 1907 and cooking in 1908.

Indianola Junior High School, was the first junior high school built in the mid-west in 1909, in Columbus, Ohio. The new concept of education was: elementary schools of six grades, junior high schools of three grades (7, 8 and 9) and senior high schools of three grades (10, 11 and 12).

In April of 1914, Herman C. Mueller, president of the Mueller Mosaic Company is elected president of the Trenton School Board.

In 1914 Trenton's educational leaders began to favor a change of organization of the schools to eliminate the sharp break between elementary and high schools and to provide a more varied and effective education for students of the adolescent age.

According to school Board President Mueller, the 6-6 or 6-3-3 plan will give students a more practical training by organizing manual and domestic training in a rational manner. The seventh, eighth and ninth grades are supposed to constitute the finishing course of the grammar school. The work is organized in large shops connected with the school and each department of work will be under an instructor well equipped for and experienced in their particular branch. The curriculum of these manual and domestic training classes will be as simple as possible and no attention will be paid to frills and fancy stunts.

As young men and women are prepared for the high school, the foundation can also be laid for a technical career, so that they can go to a higher technical or artistic institution of learning, such as the Trenton School of Industrial Arts, Drexel or Stevens Institute.

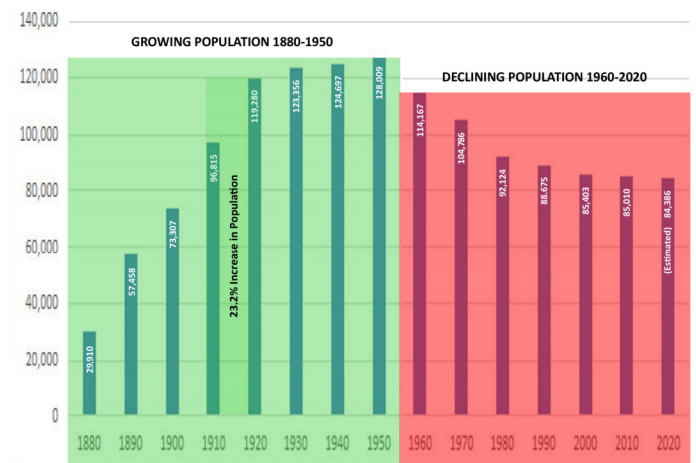
Until now, most of the training has been in the direction of college, but with junior high schools, more attention can be paid to the greater majority of students who must join the ranks of workers.

The junior high school grades would ultimately be placed in new buildings planned with facilities for the new kind of education proposed. The building of a new, modern high school to alleviate overcrowding would have to wait,

Locating the First Junior High School in Trenton

The population of the city was growing, with a population of 73,307 (7,986 pupils) in 1900, increasing to 96,815 (13,380 pupils) in 1910. The East Ward was the most crowded due to the influx of foreigners from Italy and the rest of Europe to work in Trenton's factories.

US CENSUS POPULATION OF TRENTON
1880-2020



Most of the school board thought it best to erect the first junior high school in the eastern sector of the city to help alleviate where the most crowding was occurring in the schools. Sites to be considered were Steven's plot at Greenwood and Chestnut Avenues, the Tam's property on Greenwood Avenue and Monmouth Street, the Exton plot on Greenwood Avenue and the Chambers' tract extending from Cook to Hampton Avenues. Although the locations were desirable, the cost to purchase the properties was considered exorbitantly too high.

Mayor Frederick W. Donnelly favored building the junior high school on the Almshouse property (until 1871 the site of the Bower farm) at Princeton Avenue and Southard Street. If the city sold the property to the school board, the money raised could be used to construct a much-needed new infirmary on the grounds of the Municipal Colony in Hamilton Township for

the care of the aged in Trenton.

The Almshouse property is bought by the school board in May, 1914 for \$21,000, to be used as the sight of a Junior High School, if not the first Junior High School. Some members of the school board were hoping to have a more comprehensive plans for the placement of all the junior high schools needed throughout the city.

City Comptroller Edward W. Lee, “the watchdog” of the city treasury said that he would not advocate any improvement at this time that was not a necessity. Although he was in favor of schools, he pointed to the fact that the school board had already purchased the Almshouse site, which it asked for.

In November, 1914 the Board of School Estimate refused to grant the appropriation of \$44,500 by the School Board for the purchase of the Chambers plot on Greenwood. Trenton’s first junior high school is to be constructed on the site of the Almshouse.

Building Plans for the School

In December, 1914 the school board approved the William A. Poland’s plans for the new junior high school. The building alone was estimated to be \$220,000 and the equipment was estimated to be from \$30,000 to \$40,000 additional.

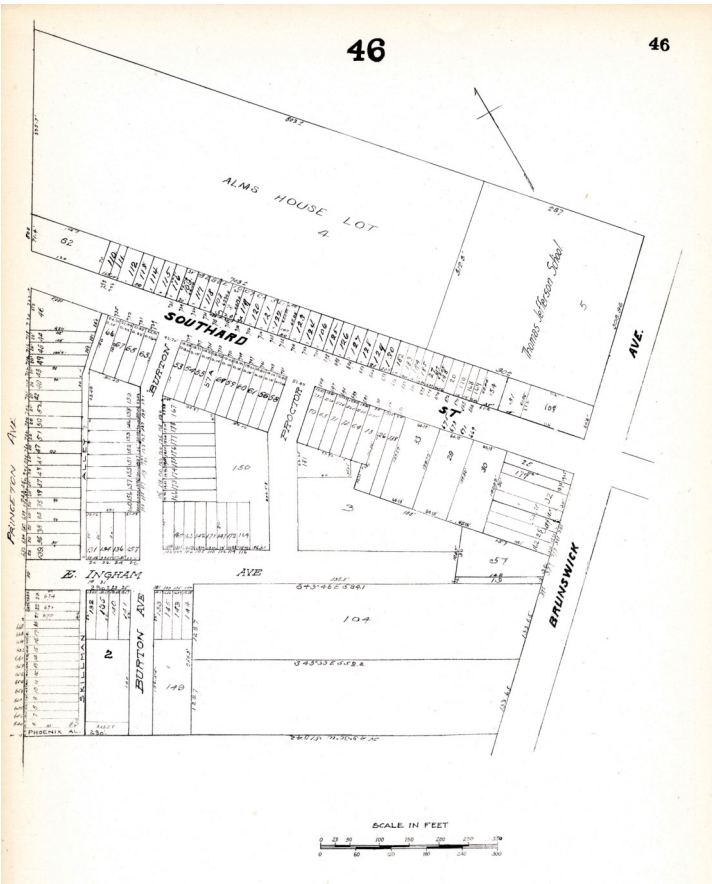
| What Junior School Contains | |
|--|--|
| SUB-BASEMENT | |
| Boys' Gymnasium | Girls' Gymnasium |
| Boiler Room | |
| SHOPS | |
| Printing Room | Sewing Room (2), (Dyeing and Fitting Rooms |
| Domestic Science Rooms (2) | Metal Working Room |
| Manual Training, Wood Working Room (2) | Machine and Tool Room |
| BASEMENT | |
| Boys' Drawing Room (2) (Blue Printing Rooms) | Boys' Lunch Room |
| Girls' Drawing Rooms (2) | Bicycle Racks |
| Kitchen | Girls' Locker, Toilet and Shower Rooms |
| Girls' Lunch Room | Boys' Locker, Toilet and Shower Rooms |
| Dressing Rooms under the stage | |
| FIRST FLOOR | |
| Laboratory (2) | Female Teachers' Retiring Room |
| Lecture Room | Library |
| Class Rooms (8) | Auditorium |
| Male Teachers' Retiring Room | Stage |
| Principal's Office, Reception Room and Stenographers' Room | |
| SECOND FLOOR | |
| Class Rooms (10) | Lecture Room |
| Laboratories (2) | Boys' Toilets |
| Apparatus Room (2) | Girls' Toilets |
| Dark Room | |
| Organ Loft (provided for in case organ is purchased) | |

The Gothic style main building, two stories high, will have a frontage of 272 feet on Princeton Avenue, with an acre of ground between the structure and the sidewalk to be used as the girls’ playground. The building will be 168 feet deep.

The building will cover about one and three-quarters acres. In the rear of the building will be located the athletic field and boys’ playground.

In the first and second stories of the main building is located the academic department of the school. Grouped on either side of the corridors in the central portion of the building are 16 uniform class rooms.

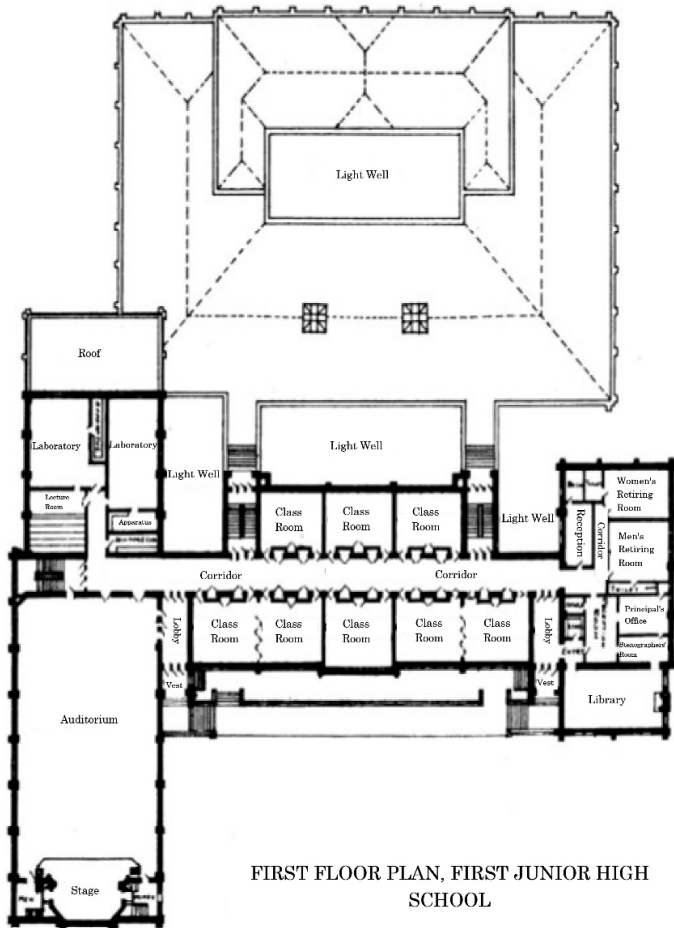
In the west wing first story is located the library, 40 feet long and 23 feet wide, facing Princeton Avenue. In the back of this area are the offices of the administration, teachers’ rest rooms, nurses’ room, baths and toilet. The second story con-



As a latch ditch effort, in September, 1914 Dr. William A. Wetzel pleads with the school board to reconsider the Almshouse location in favor of building the new junior high in the Chambersburg section. That is with the greatest number of students and building the new junior highs there would relieve congestion in the schools. The economy of erecting a building on the Almshouse lot because Trenton already owns the lot is doubtful. Following his appeal, the board votes to ask the city for \$45,000 to purchase ground in the Greenwood Avenue section for the new junior high school.

The school board’s business manager and school architect William A. Poland was asked to prepare sketches for a school on a level piece of ground. Sketches by Poland for the new school on the uneven land at the Almshouse were nearly complete. The idea of building the school on an unpurchased site in the eastern section of the city would delay the school’s construction.

tains two laboratories, laboratory lecture room, apparatus rooms, janitor's storage room and girls' toilet.



School Board Journal, August, 1918

In the east wing first story is located the auditorium, two laboratories and laboratory lecture room and apparatus rooms. The second story contains the upper part or gallery level of the auditorium, two class rooms and boys' toilet.

The auditorium projecting beyond the main building is 60 by 98 feet with a stage 21 by 30 feet, seating 1,200. In the basement, under the stage are four dressing rooms. These rooms have direct outside entrances, with stairway approaches to the stage and auditorium floor.

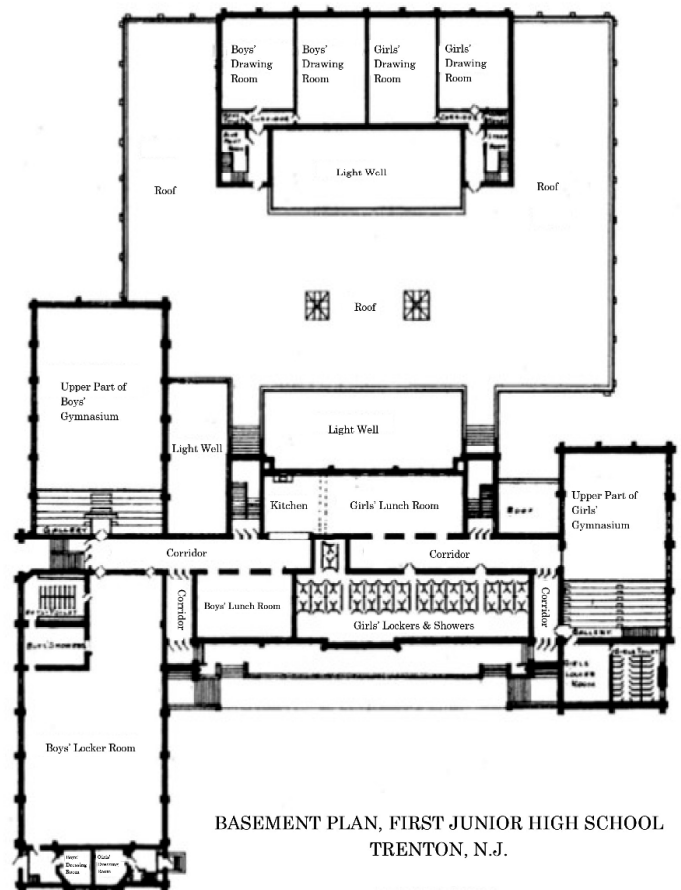
There are two prominent front entrances to the building's first floor and basement, one on the boys' side and one on the girls' side. There is an additional entrance to the boy's basement from the east end of the building.

There are three fireproof stairway towers extending from the sub-basement or ground level to the top floor of the main building, all abutting up on a central 12-foot wide fireproof corridor running longitudinally by 230 feet through the length of the building in each story. One stairway is located at the east end and the others equal-distant along and to the rear of

the corridors.

Due to the slope of the ground dropping 22 feet, the building in the rear will contain four stories, the lower floors forming a sub-basement and basement shown also in the front.

The basement floor, which is about six feet below the grad on Princeton Avenue, is divided transversely in the center. The girls' lunch room, gymnasium, shower baths, toilets and locker rooms are located in the west end. The east end of the building contains the boys' lunch room, gymnasium, shower baths, toilets, bicycle and locker rooms. The kitchen is located between the boys' and girls' lunch rooms.



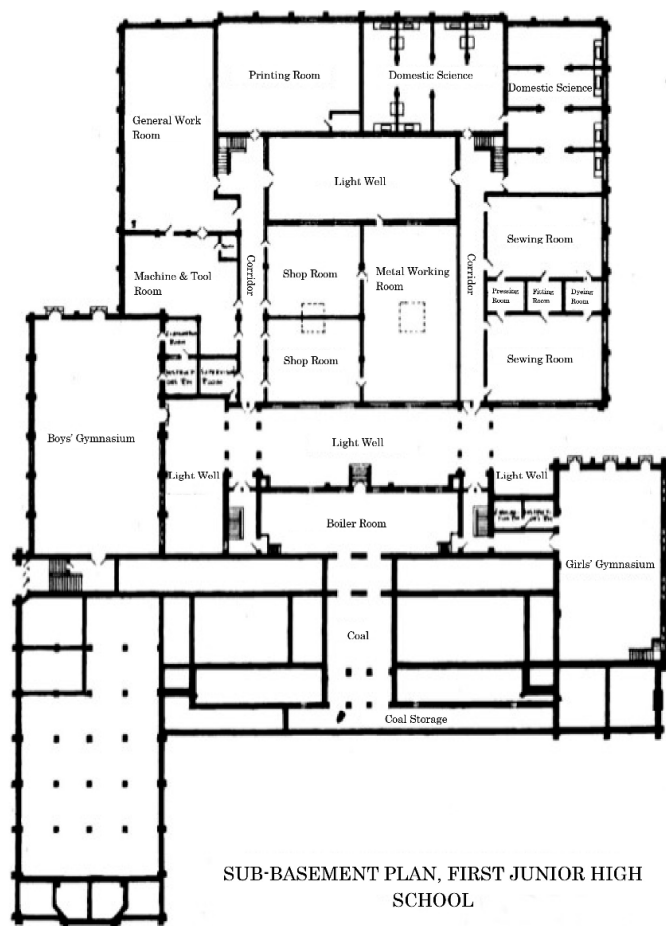
School Board Journal, August, 1918

The boiler room, coal vaults, both the girls' and boys' gymnasiums and physical directors' rooms are located in the sub-basement. The floor of the sub-basement is 21 feet below the grade on the Princeton Avenue side.

The shop building, 136 by 204 feet, is directly connected on the sub-basement level with the airway towers which run from the sub-basement to the top floor of the main building. The building will contain ten units or shops, 45 by 60 feet each, with a center light well one story high.

In the girls' half of the building there are two sewing rooms,

fitting rooms, dyeing and pressing room, store room and two kitchens. There are two drawing rooms with stock rooms located over the kitchens.



School Board Journal, August, 1918

In the boys' department there are metal working, clay working, wood working and printing shops, stock and tool rooms, drafting rooms and administration offices.

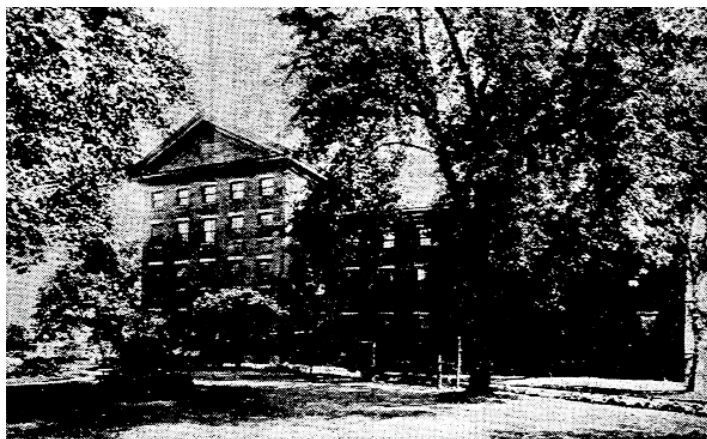
Accommodations will be for 300 students in the shops and 1,000 students in the main building. The schedule of studies being so arranged that the shops, class rooms and laboratories will be occupied during session hours.

Construction of Junior One

Razing of the old Almshouse and clearing the grounds to make way for the new junior high school began the end of March 1915. The work was given to those that were unemployed, however there were rumors that this was not always true. Sod from the rear of the Almshouse site was finding its way over a fence and into the yard of a house on Southard Street.

It cost \$2,040 to raise the Almshouse and 94 men were employed. Old materials and bathroom fixtures from the Almshouse were sold and some material was saved to be used in the construction of the new school.

The Trent Brick Company offered a property on Southard Street which runs back to the junior school site. A large building on the land was used for storage purposes during the school's construction and later the land would allow for an additional entrance to the school.



Nearly all the contracts for the school's construction went to local firms, providing work for about 16 months. Samuel Mather and Son of Trenton were awarded the general contract to build the school.

The Herman C. Mueller Controversy

Poland's plans for the school called for unglazed Flemish tile to be used for the entrance vestibules. Tile manufacturers hoping to bid on the tile, stated that only the Muller Mosaic Company manufactured that tile. School Board President Herman C. Mueller could not bid on or profit from the building of the school.

Poland had had a talk with Mueller regarding the tile he had in mind for the new school. Poland wanted a material for the vestibule that would be more or less subject to the public glaze, and which would have to be in conformity with the exterior of the building. Poland wanted a sort of rugged tile, decorated with inserts so as to conform to the architectural scheme of the building. Mueller gave him his best advice.

Poland in his bid specifications called for a Flemish material. While that was the designation that Mueller gave his tile, it is not only plain unglazed tile, but also more elaborate decorative tile. Poland merely wanted to specify with this word the general character of the tile he wanted. He did not mean to specify tile made by the Mueller Mosaic Company.

The school board received bids from five tile companies, and not a bid from the Mueller Mosaic Company. The Grueby Faience Company was selected for tile to be used in the corridors and vestibules of the new junior high school. The tiles to be used in the floors will be dark red in color with a decorative

border, and the walls will be of light buff with faience glaze with a border of greenish hue. The side wall will be six feet, three inches in height. Glazed brick will be used in the wash rooms and shower bathrooms instead of tiling.



Photo collogue of Grueby Tiles by Karl J. Flesch

More Money Needed and the Selling of Bonds

Another \$20,000 in addition to the city's appropriation of \$260,000 would be needed for building and furnishing the structure. The State Board of Education insisted that the building be made fire proof, stating that the sub-basement under the main building makes it three stories high and under the its rules, a three-story building must be made fire proof.

In June 1915 F. W. Roebling was the highest bidder on \$230,197 worth of city bonds, which included \$100,000 in bonds for the junior high school with the rest of the bonds to be used for street paving and improvements to the police station.

Laying of the Cornerstone

About 5,000 people attended the laying of the cornerstone of the junior high school on September 25, 1915.

Before the cornerstone was sealed, spectators had the opportunity to put mementoes into it. The men employed on the building of the school had asked the privilege of depositing coins and cards, and as there was still room, others could do so if they wished. A great collection of odd articles was presented: hair pins, money, name cards, badges of societies and a farm agent business card.



Photo by Karl J. Flesch

The documents that were officially placed in the stone included:

Copy of Specification; Annual Report of the City Comptroller for 1914; Inter-State Fair Association Bulletin; Bulletin of the Atlantic Deeper Waterways Association; Report of Results Accomplished under Commission Government; Father Trent's Solution (Cartoon) Explaining Assunpink Way: The Eye Opener (Chamber of Commerce Organ); Efficiency Report; Board of Commissioners: Report Based on Survey of Local Charities; Reprint of Extracts from Philadelphia Public Ledger on Trenton; Official Souvenir, 1915, Master Plumbers Association; Photograph of Mayors of Trenton; Map of Plan of Establishing Assunpink Way; Schedule of Estimates; Last Annual Report of the Board of Education; Cards of: William A. Poland, Business Manager; James W. Sipes, Draughtsman, Clarence Compton, John E. Bullock and Sketch by Daniel Pulone; Copies of: State Gazette, Sept 25, 1915; Trenton Times, Sept 24, 1915; and Sunday Times, Sept 19, 1915; Directory of Teachers of Public Schools of Trenton; Report of Council of Education of NJ on Junior School Plan; Communication from Jefferson Civics Club; Proceedings at Special Meeting of Board of Education held to consider Junior School

Plan; Address of Herman Mueller delivered at Cornerstone Laying Exercise; History of Movement to Establish First Junior School; Card containing officers of Board and Committee, etc.; Invitation and Copy of Program Manual of High School; Course of Study of High School; Copy of Last Number of Spectator; Application Blank for the Use of Public School Buildings for Education or Recreational Purposes; and Rules for Janitors.

Raising Funds for a Pipe Organ

Seniors at Trenton High School launched a project to place a pipe organ in the new junior high school. As a starter, proceeds from their senior play would go to the new pipe organ.

Proceeds from the Children's May Festival would be used for the pipe organ, but funds fell short.

Principal Dr. Wetzel suggested that the 1,500 students at Trenton High School donate \$1.11, with the dollar going for the pipe organ and 11 cents would go towards the erecting of a bronze tablet in the school hall.

Proceeds from the High School supper, serving 2,400 persons in the Masonic Temple for two evenings, were given to the organ fund of the new Junior High School.

Work Proceeds on Schedule

In December 1915 the concrete work had been finished and the floor practically completed. The work had advanced to a favorable stage that it was not necessary to suspend operations for any time during the winter months, regardless of weather.

In April 1916, plasters had been working for some time and had just about completed their work in the shop building and a portion of their work in the main building was complete. When their job was completed, floor layers started laying the maple floors and carpenters started trimming out the building. The massive boilers used for heating the building were partially installed and the plumbing work was nearing completion.

Work on the new junior high school progressed rapidly, with the school completed by the contracted August 13, 1916 date.

Leroy Smith, athletic director at the High School, supervised the installation of the new apparatus in the new junior high school's two gymnasiums. He was charged with the organizing of a football team for the junior high school.

Ready to Open

With 1,200 students enrolled, the school was ready to open. The faculty consisted of 50 men and women, with an increase corresponding to the 20 per-cent lengthening of the school day.

The daily sessions of the school were from 8:45 am until 3:30 pm, with two lunch periods of a half hour each. Of the six hours

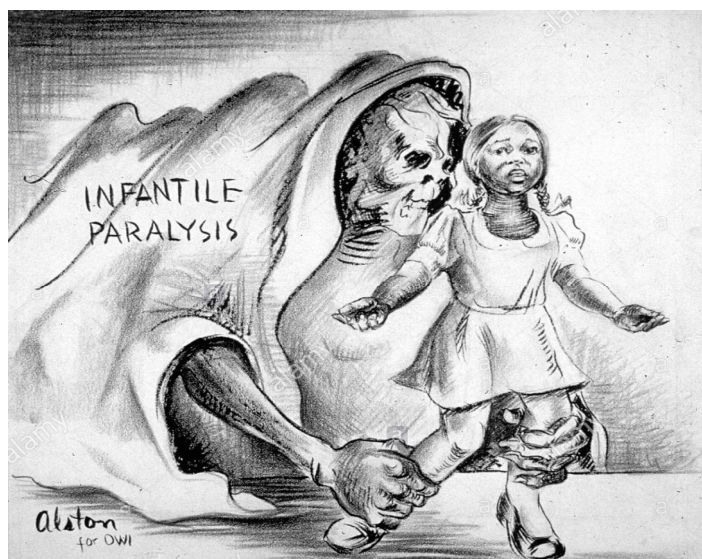
that children were present in the school, four hours were devoted to academic work and the remaining two hours devoted to: shop work, gymnasium, drawing and music. Each academic period was divided into a half hour for recitation and a half hour for supervised study, the latter relieved the students of much of the home work required in the past.

One of the features of the reception of the pupils was a physical examination at entrant to the school. Records were filed and at the end of the half year term, a similar examination was made, and noted the physical advancement of the pupils.

Another feature was the library, where the pupils were taught the card catalogue system.

Opening of Trenton Schools Delayed

In 1916, Trenton schools were scheduled to open on Monday, September 11. However, there was a huge infantile paralysis epidemic sweeping sections of the country. Trenton in proportion to its population was the most seriously affected area in the United States.



In August, in order to combat the epidemic, Trenton had quarantined children from theaters, moving picture houses and all public gatherings.

The opening of schools was postponed many times. It was not until nearly the end of October that officials thought it safe to open the schools on October 30, 1916.

Trenton's new Junior High School Number One opened to 929 students, well below the 1,200 that had enrolled earlier. Dr. Wetzel stated that he thought because of the great demand for labor at the time, many of the pupils, both boys and girls had gone to work. Enrollment at other Trenton schools had fallen too and the school board had more teachers than it needed.

Dedication of Junior High School Number One

Junior High School Number One, acknowledged to be at the time the latest in institutions of learning in the east, attracted the attention of educators not only in NJ, but in other states as well. At its formal dedication on December 7, 1917, 3,000 people attended.

Surrogate Samuel H. Bullock, chairman of the grounds and building committee of the Board of Education opened the exercises by turning the building over to Mayor Frederick W. Donnelly, who represented the city. The mayor, in turn, presented the building to Herman C. Mueller, president of the Board of Education.

Several musical numbers were played by Edward A. Mueller, son of Herman C. Mueller and organist of the State Street Methodist Church, upon the pipe organ that was recently installed in the auditorium.

Junior High School Number One had already been in use for over a year since its opening on October 30, 1916.



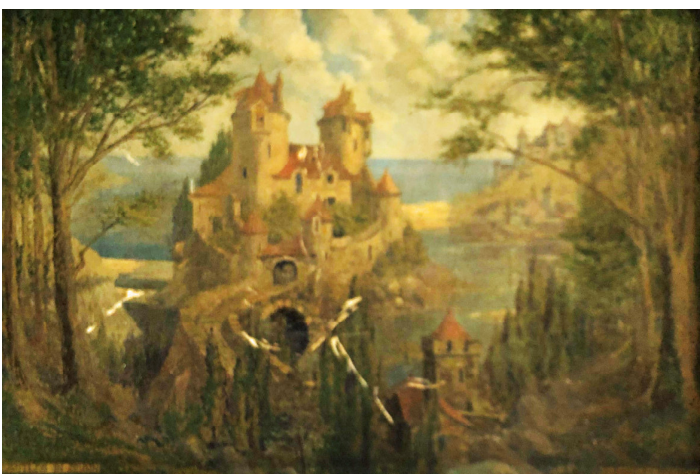
Auditorium, from the School Board Journal, August, 1918



Library, from the School Board Journal, August, 1918



Manual Training, from the School Board Journal, August, 1918



"Castles in Spain" executed by Frank Forrest Frederick, director of the Trenton School of Industrial Arts of which Herman C. Mueller was on the board. The painting is on the wall above the ceramic fireplace in the library.



Print Shop, from the School Board Journal, August, 1918



Domestic Science, from the School Board Journal, August, 1918

S. W. MATHER & SON

*General Contractors
for
Junior High School
Building*

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School Board Journal

Founded March 1891 by WILLIAM GEORGE BRUCE

Volume LVII, Number 2

AUGUST, 1918

Subscription, \$2.00 the Year



SCHOOL TERMS MUST NOT BE SHORTENED!

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Sources for this article:

Trenton Times

A History of Trenton 1679-1929

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US Census Bureau