



Livingston High School: The Story of a High School

The year was 1898. Livingston, which then boasted a total population of approximately 1,100 residents, had four schools and seven teachers. The budget was \$1,800, an amount which seems infinitesimal compared with the nearly \$1,500,000 required in 1955. Then, as now, there were students to be educated. Citizens who were alert to the students' needs, led by Benjamin De Camp, then president of the Board of Education, Pell T. Collins and Marcus De Camp, members of the Board of Education, and Sidney Winans, the district clerk, worked successfully for a local high school. For the first time, Livingston's grammar school graduates were able to continue their education without leaving town.

Thirty-two students, some from Roseland, which was then a part of Livingston, and some from Hanover, began their secondary work under the guidance of John L. Hunt, the first principal and Miss Lena Haven, his assistant. There, on the second floor of the library, in a room intended for a community auditorium, work went on in earnest. Classes were held on the stage, the footlights of which were candles, or in front of it. Lighting, when necessary, was by oil lamp. In 1902, the first class graduated from Livingston High School, diplomas being given to nine girls and one boy.

No modern busses rolled up to the door of the library in those days! Most Livingston students walked, some for three or four miles one way. Others used bicycles, came on horseback, or by carriage. A pony and run-about brought several students from Roseland daily. From nine to twelve and from one to three, the students busied themselves with English, Latin, French, German, history, civics, physics, mathematics, and other courses such as book-keeping, physical geography, and mental arithmetic. College requirements were met, and a number of graduates did go on to further their education.

A gradual, year-by-year decline in the high school program began in 1909. Roseland, having become an independent community, sent its student to Caldwell, and Hanover decided to use the high school in Madison. By 1913, only a two-year program was available in Livingston, juniors and seniors went to Caldwell until all classes were shifted to West Orange in 1920. That was the year which marked the end of secondary education in Livingston for some time.

Significant events that followed contributed to what we now know as Livingston High School and include the purchase of fourteen acres on South Livingston Avenue as a site for a high school in 1927; the shift of all seventh and eighth grade students to Central School in 1937 for the beginning of a junior high school program; the transfer of high school students from West

Orange to Caldwell in 1944; and the development of plans for the Civic Center, which included a high school.

In September, 1949, Livingston Junior High School was ready and opened its doors to 340 seventh, eighth and ninth grade students, who spread out through sixteen classrooms. Livingston had been growing. In 1949, when the junior high school opened, the population was 9,500 compared to the 5,500 of 1937. There were 1,432 children in the local schools, 48 teachers, and 239 Livingston students in Caldwell High School. Other communities were growing too; including Caldwell. In February 1952, they sent the inevitable notice that the graduating class of 1955 would have to be the last for Livingston students.

Preparation for the opening of Livingston High School went into high gear, but what needed to be done? A steering committee of law and faculty members conducted a thorough study of courses offered in Essex County high schools, actual course selections of Livingston students in Caldwell, post-graduation activities of the classes of 1950, 1951 and 1952, post-high school plans of Livingston's secondary students, among other things, as a basis for recommending a curriculum. Other schools were visited, plans were studied, courses of study were prepared, and various faculty members had the opportunity of serving on evaluating committees of the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools.

Livingston High School, with an enrollment of 742, officially opened in the junior high building in September 1954 for the seventh through tenth grades, with some homerooms and classes meeting in the barracks on Berkley Place and in the Recreation Building. During 1954, students watched their high school grow until the doors leading to the new building were opened and, in 1957, Livingston High School graduated its first class since 1911. The rest is history.

(Taken, in part, from the Dedication of the Livingston High School program, Tuesday, October 11, 1955)