

## Development of Patchogue Educational Institutions, c1813-ca. 1924: Summary

[Based on: Gordon, Wellington E. *History of Patchogue*. Patchogue, NY: The Author, 1924: pp. 78-91.]

### **Brookhaven Town School Districts & Redistricting: 1813, 1842, 1868-69**

**1813:** In this year, Brookhaven town was divided into 23 numbered school districts. Of these 2 were in the Patchogue area:

- No. 20: “embraced the inhabitants west of Austin Roe’s, as far west as Patchogue stream” [i.e., from Swan (East) River to the Patchogue River]
- No. 21: “embraced the inhabitants west of Patchogue stream as far west as Islip [town] line.”

**1842:** In this year, probably to accommodate population growth, Brookhaven Town renumbered and multiplied its school districts, resulting in more for Patchogue:

- No. 24: Patchogue west – Its schoolhouse was located near the Catholic Church, on W. Main St.; with the old Congregational Church (Lake St.?) used for advanced pupils
- No. 25: Patchogue east – Its schoolhouse was located on E. Main St., on the home lot later occupied by Robert S. Pelletreau
- No. 26: Patchogue Lane [an earlier name for South Ocean Avenue] – Its schoolhouse was located on Division St., near Ocean Ave, near what later became railroad grounds
- No. 35: South Shore [along Patchogue Bay / Great South Bay] – Its schoolhouse was located on Patchogue Lane [S. Ocean Ave.], near its base, almost opposite Smith St.

**1868-69:** A struggle over whether or not to merge the 4 districts into a single Union Free School District led to a series of meetings, and finally a vote in favor, all appropriately, at Military Hall, with UFSD #24, the result.

### **Rise & Era of Private School Predominance: ca. 1848-1870**

**Rate system:** School payment based on number of children to be sent, and the number of days of attendance (presumably the more children, the more favorable the rate, and the more days attended the higher the rate, with a possible discount negotiable, but, in both cases, the higher the overall cost). The more students and the greater the attendance, the more the teacher was assured of a living. Schools were generally a room in the teacher’s home. Too poor to afford the rate: Fine. Your kids can remain illiterate, their prospects in life often dim.

**Ca. 1848: Miss Sarah & Miss Julia Havens’ school:** Col. John S. Havens built a 1-room schoolhouse for his daughters (opposite his house Main St. & Medford Ave.) Martha Hudson whose later seagoing, whaling adventures with her husband were much

later recorded, was taught by the Havens sisters. Among others taught there, from the surrounding area were: Amelia Leaming, Mrs. Ellis Smith, Mrs. Georgia Homan, and Miss Mary Terry (per W.E. Gordon). When Sarah Havens married “lawyer Wickham” [probably William Wickham] the school was closed [date undisclosed].

**Ca. 1848: Miss Mary Jayne’s school:** Daughter of Van Wyck Jayne, the school was in her home (S. side of E. Main St., nearly opposite foot of Maple Ave.)

**Ca. 1860’s: Miss Carrie Case school:** Ran a private school in her home, on E. Main St., at the foot of Case St. (Later, she married Augustine Terry.)

**Ca. 1860’s: Miss Emeline Wood’s school:** Taught in her residence, on E. side of Bay Ave., nearly opposite Park St.

**[Ca. 1860’s]: Mrs Phebe A. Weeks’ school:** Taught in a room in a barn, on her property on the East side of Bay Ave., nearly opposite Brook St. Her daughter, **Mary Ellen Weeks** continued after her mother “retired” from teaching.

**[Ca. 1860’s]: Miss Betsey Jacobs school:** Run from her home [somewhere] on Ocean Ave.

**Ca. 1861-1865: Miss Ophelia Wicks’ school:** Taught a few pupils in her home in Canaan

**[Early?] 1860’s-early 1880’s: Elizabeth Banker’s boarding school:** located in a house, set back from the street, on the site later occupied by the Masonic Temple (where the bank drive through is today), then part of the Jennings estate. She taught both boarding pupils from out of town, and village students, whose parents were dissatisfied by the manner and offerings of the initial public schools. She was well-received for the quality of her teaching. Once the Union School was created, introducing many improvements and reforms, students returned to the public schools, and in the early 1880’s the school ceased operation.

**1865-1867: Mr. A.V. Davis’ & Mrs. Sophia Young Davis’ school:** Located in Military Hall (which was just N. of Ruland’s marble works). Mrs. Davis taught about 20 primary students on the lower floor; Mr. Davis taught more advanced students on the upper floor. A popular teacher, he jokingly referred to the upper floor as his “high school”, only for its location. In 1867, when he accepted employment as principal of the new public school in Islip.

**Late 1860’s: Mr. [?] Bagley’s school:** Was taught in the old Episcopal Church’s basement (on W. Main St.). He was known as a good teacher, but one who regularly sat with his feet on the desk, chewing and spitting tobacco directly onto the floor. With the Civil War ended, tobacco was again in full supply, and perhaps the basement wasn’t considered an essential feature of the house of worship. (Then again, perhaps schooling was stopped when the janitor or parishioners stopped by to clean.)

**Free School System, 1867:** Following a prolonged resistance, NYS approved taxation to fund schools open to all, though the curriculum was minimalistic, and often teachers were far from well qualified. Discipline was fierce (of the “spare the rod and spoil the child” variety). So, many parents (who could afford it), still preferred private instruction.

**1895-1897: Long Island Latin School:** Situated at the leased and remodeled Howell House (corner of Main St. and Maple Ave.), this school was the brainchild of Rev. A.E. Colton, of the Congregational Church, as an attempt to create a secondary school in Patchogue, initially funded by subscriptions. It met with initial success, even creating a literary club, and a football team, and expansion of the curriculum. But, ongoing funding shortfalls resulted in elimination of two key positions, leaving the school a bit rudderless, esp. after Rev. Colton left, and as the remaining teachers stretched to cover the full curriculum. Denominational funding was sought, from Brooklyn, by the new minister, but was unavailable in time to save the school.

### **1870-1924: The Rise of Public Education & UFSD # 24**

**1871: Central School** built and dedicated

- Principals:
  - A.M. Drummond, 1871-1875
  - Levi Seeley, 1875-1881
  - Wellington E. Gordon, 1881-1919
  - Sheridan Linn, 1919-[?]
- In **1892** the High School was admitted to supervision by the NYS Board of Regents
- Between **1893-1908**, repeated overcrowding of the Central School led to construction and expansion of several elementary schools
- in **1897** central school overcrowding led to rental of the upper floor of the Episcopal Church Parrish house for 2 years
- after **1908**, served solely as a **High School** and for District Administrative Offices

**1888: Kindergarten** introduced (1<sup>st</sup> in Suffolk County; one of the 1<sup>st</sup> in NYS)

**1893: River Avenue Elementary School** (1-room schoolhouse)

- replaced in **1897** by a 4-room building
- in **1905** school board hired a room on Waverly Ave. to accommodate River Ave. school overcrowding
- enlarged River Ave. building in **1906** to 6 rooms
- lot N. of site was bought in **1923**, and house remodeled to accommodate 2 primary classes on lower floor

**1899: Maple Avenue Elementary School** (4-room building; corner of Maple Ave. & Thorn St.)

- in **1904** building was enlarged to 8 rooms

**1905:** As the district contained over 5,000 residents, the NYS Regents, the schools were placed under their 1<sup>st</sup> Superintendent, Wellington E. Gordon, being elected.

**1908: Bay Avenue Elementary School** (16-room brick building)

**1916:** Future high school site, on S. Ocean Avenue, S. of Baker St., purchased by the district, with the addition of 5-6 acres donated by Ruth Litt, who owned property behind the purchase.

**1919:** When Wellington Gordon retired, Sheridan Linn was elected the district's next Superintendent

**1924:** New **High School** (brick building) was dedicated, accommodating 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades.