

## **Memories of Herndon High School: The Locust Street Years**

By Barbara Glakas

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Last month we wrote about one of the earliest Herndon schools, which was located at 725 Center Street (“Herndon’s Early Public Schools”). A new school that housed all 12 grades was built on Locust Street in 1910-11. It was destroyed by fire during the 1927-28 school year and was quickly rebuilt. A new building was constructed next to the older one in 1952.

Although it was known as Herndon High School, all grades were housed in the Locust Street facility for a number of years. The elementary students attended until Herndon Elementary was built in 1961, and the high school students attended until the new Herndon High School opened on Bennett Street in 1967. Herndon Middle School, which houses the seventh and eighth grades, remains at the Locust Street location.

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Virginia Clarity attended the school from first to twelfth grade, from 1940 to 1952. At the time it was “the only school in town,” and there were only four other high schools in the county. Although the building was small, it housed about 500 students. “It was a close knit group of students,” Virginia said. “You knew about everyone.” She noted that, “students who went to other elementary schools in the area (e.g., Floris and Great Falls), came to Herndon High when entering the eighth grade. There was no intermediate or middle school at that time.” All children who lived in the town limits walked to school. Busses ran for those students outside of town. “I can’t remember a snow day and, of course, there was no air conditioning, so you went to school even if it was hot (and it was).”

Richard Downer says he started eighth grade in 1953, and remembers the old building being separate from the new building. His classes were held in the old building, which, he recalled, looked much like the current schoolhouse at Frying Pan Park. He said school dances were held in a small auditorium. “I remember playing in the HHS Dance Band along with Gray [Grayson] Hanes and others for a Valentine’s Day ‘Sweetheart Dance’ many, many years ago.” He noted that Fairfax County, unfortunately, tore the old building down over a July 4th holiday without notifying the Town.

Arthur Nachman, who attended school on Locust Street during his second, seventh, and eighth grade years, also recalled his music experiences there. “My fondest memories were of the band class during my middle school years. It was taught by Mr. Sweeny. Because of the positive effect it had on my life, I continue to support the band programs at the middle school. I developed a love for performing that I carried on through high

school, college, and today.” Nachman purchases instruments and funds master instructors for the middle school band program.

Joy McGlinchy Reed graduated in the auditorium of the high school in 1956. Her father, G. Wilson McGlinchy (mayor from 1949-52), graduated from the high school in 1932. She remembered some of the other physical structures at the school site. “If you stood at the back of the original school building, there were four buildings, with a walkway leading to the original gym at the end. The home economics building was a free standing cottage including kitchen, living, and dining rooms and, I think, two bedrooms. The cannery was on the far right, but before you got to those buildings, the [home economics] house was on the left and the shop/agricultural department was on the right. The whole site was like a quad arrangement. The cannery was on the grounds and used by anyone in the community.” She also recalled that there were different diplomas offered at that time, depending on whether or not you were going to go to college or into business. Students also were able to return after graduation and take postgraduate course and play sports. Despite World War II and the Cold War, she reflected, “high school was a more carefree time.”

Elma Mankin attended the school as a student for 11 years, graduating in 1941. Immediately after graduation she became the school secretary, at the urging of then-Principal Rice. She was the high school’s first secretary, and served in that position for five years. She fondly remembers the school’s soup kitchen. “During my 11 years at Herndon High School, I—like all students—carried my lunch. When the other buildings were built (the agriculture building, the gym, the home economics cottage, and the commercial department) one area near the home economics cottage became a soup kitchen. If students brought their own bowl and spoon, they could get soup to eat with their lunch.” She added, “I never tasted bean or potato soup as good as theirs.” Years later when, when she was the school secretary, the cafeteria opened. It was the first school cafeteria in Fairfax County.