

A HISTORY OF THE HUNTINGTON UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Through its schools . . .



The current Huntington Town Hall on Main Street sits on a site that has long played an important role in the history of public education in Huntington. Since the construction of Huntington Academy in 1794, thousands of school children were educated in buildings erected on this land.

Education began in Huntington in 1657 when Jonas Holdsworth (or Houldsworth) was hired by the town to become the first school teacher. According to local archives, the first day of public education was February 11, 1657. Our first school was built sometime around 1660 somewhere near the Town Green—probably on Park Avenue. Many grade schools were built after that, but there is little mention of them in the town records.

The **Huntington Academy** was constructed in 1794. It was basically a college preparation, tuition paying school located on just about the same property as the current Huntington Town Hall. Some fifty leading citizens of the town gave monies to build a school for teaching the new liberal education. The building measured 40 by 24 feet. It was closed in 1856-57 to make room for a new structure.

The **Huntington High School** or **Union School** as it was known at the time, opened in 1857 with grades 1-12. Huntington was the third or fourth high school in the state to take on the official duties of a Union Free School. (free secondary education). The school was located on the same site as Huntington Academy. The wooden structure featured an elevated first floor, with a partially above ground lower level, which was used to provide space for kindergarten and additional primary classrooms. Over the years, as the town grew and public education became more popular, the building became crowded.

In our school district records there is a copy of a notice that says, “School House For Sale” and is dated September 3, 1858. It reads: “The undersigned, committee for that purpose, hereby offer for sale at the **School House** on Green Street, near Main. The building is 20 x 42 feet, two stories high, and in a good state of repair. The lot is 125 feet square (sounds like 1 ½ acres). There is an excellent, never failing well of water on the premises. For further particulars enquire of, Brewster Conklin, Jesse Gould and Isaac Adams.” We do not have any details regarding what grades it housed, whether it featured public or private education or when it was built.

Main Street School (right) was built in 1898 to house kindergarten—8th grade youngsters. It is still standing today as the smaller part of Huntington Town Hall (west side of complex). The brick building served as a grammar school until Village Green School was constructed in 1952, at which time Main Street School became an annex of Huntington High School.



The **Sewing and Trade Building** at 209 Main Street was built in 1905. At first it was organized as a school for girls to learn sewing, cooking, etc. Boys were eventually admitted, too. It was a private school but did rent out space to our school district for kindergarten classes. In later years, (1940's and 1950's) it was used as our district office, housing central administration services. Administrative offices were downstairs while the upstairs was reserved for Board of Education monthly meetings. Today the building is owned and used by the Huntington Historical Society. The building was constructed of yellow brick and is located across the street from the Old Burying Ground cemetery, which holds the remains of many Revolutionary War soldiers as well as leading Huntington citizens.

The **School Street School** (or **Station School**) was built for \$6,500 in 1906 with four rooms for primary youngsters. It was located on School Street just off Lowndes Avenue in Huntington Station. It closed in 1913 when **Lowndes Avenue School** opened and was later used as a post office and as a Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall. It was demolished in 1968.

The school district continued to grow and **Halesite School** or **O'Hara Street School** was opened in 1908. It was basically a one room school house. It is currently a private home.

A new **Huntington High School** was constructed in 1909-10 on the same site as the original high school, which was also known as **Union School**. It housed grades nine through twelve. An addition was added in 1927. In 1950 the building was renamed **R.L. Simpson High School**. The school closed during the school year in 1958 after the current high school opened. Following extensive renovations the building reopened as **R.L. Simpson Junior High School** in 1961, housing grades 7-9 until closing in 1976. The building was sold to the Town of Huntington for use as Town Hall.



Roosevelt School was an imposing structure on Lowndes Avenue that served the school district well for forty years.

Lowndes Avenue School in Huntington Station was built for \$58,000 in 1913 and served as a K-8 school. When an addition was erected in 1927 at a cost of \$99,409, the building was renamed **Roosevelt School**. (pictured above) It was reorganized as a K-6 school and served the district until it was demolished in 1967-68 as part of the Huntington Station Urban Renewal Project.

Woodbury Avenue School was erected in 1923-24. Originally it served as a K-8 school. When **Robert K. Toaz Junior High School** opened in 1939, Woodbury Avenue School was reorganized and housed grades K-6 until it closed as a public school in 1971. It featured two classrooms per grade except for half day kindergarten. It was rented to BOCES and later to a Christian School for several more years after it closed. The building and land were sold by the district. The majestic and stately building was eventually demolished and condominium units were constructed. All that's left now are memories.

Lincoln School was almost the twin of **Woodbury Avenue School**. It was constructed in 1923 on 9th Avenue in Huntington Station and originally housed K-8 students. Later it became a K-6 school. Like Woodbury Avenue, Lincoln featured two classes for each grade. When it closed in the early 1970's it was rented out for use as school serving youngsters with special educational needs. It was finally sold and converted to a thirty apartment complex. Very little has been done to the exterior of the building and it could be mistaken today as a functioning school. It sits on a small piece of property on the south side of 9th Avenue, adjacent to the St. Hugh of Lincoln Church. Lincoln School served Huntington School District children for almost 50 years.



Condominiums now stand behind a large gate at the site where Woodbury Avenue School was located. It served district students for 47 years.

During the years Huntington High School was located on Main Street (now Town Hall) football and baseball games and track meets were held in Heckscher Park. The cinders of the old track can be found along the tennis courts.

Nathan Hale School opened in 1928 as a kindergarten through sixth grade school in Halesite. The construction of this modern brick school, made it possible to close the **Sewing and Trade Building**. Located on Bay Road, this well built, colonial structure was set up as a two class per grade unit school. Three additions were added over the years until it closed in the 1973, becoming a district administration center until 1983. It was finally shuttered and shortly after was sold and converted into a condominium complex. Today the building still retains its classic look.

Robert K. Toaz Junior High School was erected in 1938/39 by the Federal Emergency Works Progress Administration and was located on Woodhull and Nassau Roads, just off New York Avenue. The school was the first junior high school in Suffolk County when it opened. It housed seventh, eighth and ninth grade students. The building was named after Huntington's superintendent during the 1906-33 period. For several years it had one wing allotted to sixth graders. After the school opened, the district's K-8 grammar schools were reorganized to serve kindergarten through sixth grade. An extension was added to Toaz in 1970, adding needed classroom space. Toaz closed in 1982 and was rented and later sold to Touro Law School.

Village Green School was completed in 1952 and was organized as a kindergarten through sixth grade building. Three sections for each grade were housed in the building. It was located on the corner of Park Avenue and 25A. All the experts agreed that it would be the last elementary school built in the school district. It is was a true split-level, all brick build and modern in every sense, located in the lovely Town Green area. It closed in 1973 and is now a community center.

For many years surrounding districts did not operate high schools and instead sent students to Huntington once they reached ninth grade.

J. Taylor Finley Middle School (right) has served the district well since the mid-1960's, housing many different grade levels, including seventh and eighth grades today. It features a typical post war design and has spacious athletic fields behind it.



The rear of the old Village Green School now serves as the entrance to the YMCA. The site is now houses a senior citizen program, a pre-school, a movie theatre and various other programs. Most of the original windows are still in place today.



School Street School in Huntington Station was built for \$6,500 in 1906 and closed its classrooms in 1913. It later became a post office and VFW Hall before it was demolished in 1968.





Robert K. Toaz Junior High School was built in 1938/39 and named after a longtime Huntington Superintendent of Schools. Today, the building still sits majestically in place, with its distinctive facade and cupola at the Nassau Road entrance. Large wings of classrooms are not visible in this photo.

J. Taylor Finley Junior High School opened in 1965 and is located on Greenlawn Road, about a half mile from Park Avenue off Route 25A. During its history, Finley has also contained a full (2 classes per grade) elementary school and half the sixth grades in the district. It sits on a large, beautiful plot. One of its features was a 300 seat large group instruction room. Today, it retains its modern look.



The Sewing and Trade Building at 209 Main Street was first used as a school for girls to learn sewing, cooking, etc. Later boys were admitted. Today it is owned by the Huntington Historical Society.

Flower Hill (Flower Hill Road), **Southdown** (Southdown Road) and **Washington** (Whitson Road) **Elementary Schools** opened in 1954. The buildings are known as “sister schools.” In a crash building program, they all came on line featuring two units per grade and originally housed kindergarten through sixth grade students. Each is located in a corner of the district, with **Jefferson Elementary School** eventually becoming the fourth corner school. Four years later another wing had to be added to each of the three schools.

The current **Huntington High School** opened in 1958 and is located just off McKay and Oakwood Roads. The land it is built on was once part of the large H. Bellas Hess estate. Several additions and many improvements have created an ageless look to the school. The site for the building was chosen after other sites on Woodhull Road and Lawrence Hill Road had been considered and rejected.

Jefferson Elementary School was built in 1962 on Oakwood Road near Pulaski Road in the Southwest corner of the district. A well-built, attractive building, inside and out, it features a cleverly used courtyard. The former surrounding farmland is now officially protected, and is returning to its natural state—a lush growth of mixed pre-forest trees, shrubs and weeds. Jefferson opened soon after the 1962-63 school year started and originally housed kindergarten through sixth grade students.

Woodhull **Elementary School** opened for the 1967–68 school year as a kindergarten through sixth grade building. The building absorbed students from Roosevelt School when that building was closed and demolished as a result of the Huntington Station urban renewal project. In the late 1970’s residents rejected a proposal to sell the building for use as a nursing home.

Mr. J. Taylor Finley had a very distinguished 37 year career in the Huntington School District. He served as a teacher, elementary and junior high school principal, assistant superintendent and the superintendent of schools from 1957-63. He was well-known for wearing bow ties.

Huntington Elementary School opened in 1969 and initially housed students from **Robert K. Toaz Junior High School**. This was necessary for one year while repairs were being made to Toaz. Huntington Elementary originally served as a kindergarten through sixth grade school and has featured a variety of grade configurations since. Located on Lowndes Avenue in Huntington Station, this elementary school was built with the local community in mind. It has a tilted floor in the full auditorium, an oversized gym, several multi-purpose rooms, an oversized cafeteria, and large library. The easy access to all the facilities, especially at evening hours, is much appreciated by everyone. The special courtyard includes an amphitheater with a built-in concrete series of steps for outdoor instruction and school events. The school is built on the site of the former Roosevelt School.

Huntington Superintendents of Schools

(From 1906—present)

Robert K. Toaz:	1906—1933
Robert L. Simpson:	1933
Raymond C. Burdick:	1933—1946
J. Allan Matthews:	1946
Lyle R. Morris:	1946—1949
Carl V. Warren:	1949—1957
J. Taylor Finley:	1957—1963
Charles C. St. Clair:	1963—1967
Christopher R. Vagts:	1967—1969
William F. Keogh:	1969—1972
Charles W. Rudiger:	1973—1984
William J. McCarthy:	1972—1973 and 1984—1987
Richard B. Stock:	1987—1993
Judith Pastel:	1993—1996
David Nydick:	1996—1997
Kevin Colpoys:	1997—2000
James Brucia:	2000—2001
John J. Finello:	2001—Present

The information in this booklet is largely the product of research performed by Huntington School District historian **Jack Abrams**. It was written by Jim Hoops. The district welcomes donations of old yearbooks, diplomas, photographs, books and other school artifacts and mementos. Call 673-2038.

Huntington High School Principals

(From 1930—present)

Robert L. Simpson:	1930—June 1950
Robert Cushman:	July 1950 — June 1968
Richmond Bell:	July 1968 — Dec. 1969
Clifford Murray:	Jan. 1970 — June 1972
Leonard Adler:	July 1972 — June 1974
Lyman Warner:	July 1974 — Dec. 1980
George Reilly:	Jan. 1981 — April 1981
Chuck Williams:	April 1981 — June 1981
James Salvatore:	July 1981 — June 1991
Mary Lou Griffin:	July 1991 — June 1997
Steven Gilbert:	July 1997 — June 2001
Carmela Leonardi:	July 2001 — Present



Lincoln Elementary School seen from the front (top) and rear (bottom) today. The 1923 building still stands on Ninth Avenue in Huntington Station and is known as Lincoln Farms Apartments.



Alma Mater—Amici

Our strong band shall ne'er be broken
formed in Huntington High;
Far surpassing wealth unspoken,
sealed by friendship's tie.

Chorus

Huntington High School, now and ever
deep graven on each heart,
shall be found unwavering true,
when we from life shall part.

High school life at best is passing
gliding swiftly by;
Then let us pledge in word and deed
our love for Huntington High.



Huntington High School was once located across the street from the Old First Presbyterian Church (above), which served as the site of many Huntington graduation ceremonies over the years. The first class graduated there in 1862 with six members, who promptly formed an alumni association that continues today.

During the time that J. Taylor Finley Junior High was being constructed in 1964-65, R.L. Simpson Junior High became so crowded some students attended some of their classes across the street in second floor classrooms at the Old First Presbyterian Church. A crossing guard ushered children across 25A.

Graduation Tradition . . .

During the early years of the Huntington School District the high school graduation was held in July at the First Presbyterian Church, with the first graduation being held on July 18, 1862.

In 1893 the event was moved to the Huntington Opera House but soon returned to the church. The latest date on record for a ceremony is July 22, 1864.

Since at least 1911 the graduation exercises were held on a Tuesday at 8:15 p.m., except in 1925 when it was held on a Monday night.

For decades the graduation was held in the old high school auditorium (also known as Assembly Hall during the early part of the 20th Century.)

In 1965 the graduation was moved to Sunday and was held on June 27 at 3:15 p.m. in the auditorium. It was moved to 3 p.m. in 1969 and moved outdoors in 1970.

In 1981 the time was changed to 1:30 p.m. and the ceremonies continued to be held on a Sunday at that time until 2003.

For the first time since June 23, 1964, the graduation was held on a weekday night in 2003—June 27 at 6 p.m. on the football field.

At the 50th Huntington High School commencement at 8:15 p.m. Tuesday, June 20, 1911, **Leroy Randle Grumman** gave a salutatory address titled "The Aeroplane" to his classmates in Assembly Hall of the new high school building (now the current town hall). Mr. Grumman would go on to become, arguably, Huntington's most famous graduate, founding the Grumman Aircraft Company that would later play a key role in building planes during World War II and creating the Lunar Escape Module, integral to the program that allowed man to walk on the moon.

Artifacts, including photographs and building dedication plaques, can be found lining the hallway of the district's central administration offices at Huntington Intermediate School (Tower Street entrance) and Woodhull Intermediate School. The public is welcome to view these items. Call Jack Abrams (673-2038) for a guided tour.