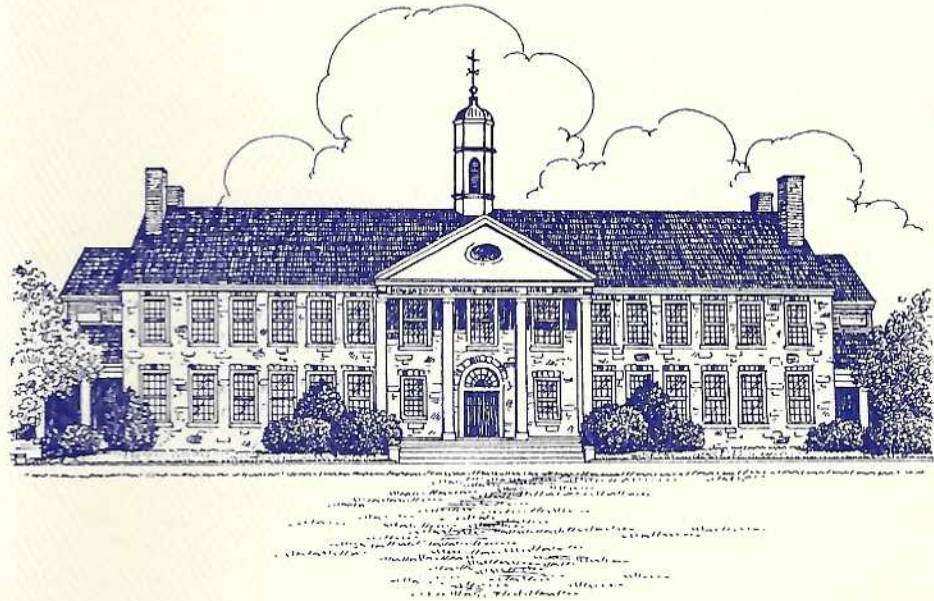


# The Housatonic Valley Regional High School



Fifty Years  
1939 - 1989

By  
Edward M. and Mary T. Kirby  
Class of 1945

# The Housatonic Valley Regional High School

**Fifty Years  
1939 - 1989**

By  
**Edward M. and Mary T. Kirby  
Class of 1945**

**September 1989**

## FOREWORD

It was about two years ago that a steering committee was formed to organize a celebration in recognition of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School. Representatives from the school, from each of the five decades of Housatonic history and key people from the community have been active participants in planning for this occasion. At the first meeting Judith Thormann Moore, guidance counselor and Spanish teacher, was elected chairman.

We were very pleased to be asked to compile a history of this unique institution. Reviewing the story of the formation of the Regional School District, its growth and problems and marvelous successes, brought back many wonderful memories.

As we were to learn, the writing of a history such as this can create many difficulties. With limitations of space it was not so much what should be included but what important facts and people would be left unmentioned. That decision making process concerned us a great deal. There is no question in our minds that a complete history of this unique school should be further developed by someone in full-length book form in the near future. We hope that our modest approach in this document will lead to that end.

When work began on this project early in 1988, a decision was made to include memories, ideas and reflections from a cross-section of those who have been associated with Housatonic in one way or another. This would supplement the more factual aspects of the school's growth and development. It was important to us that this half century of high school education in the northwest corner of Connecticut be viewed through the eyes of more than just two individuals. We wrote to some sixty people having connections with the school, offering them the opportunity to send their "Reflections" on Housatonic Valley Regional High School. The responses received are included in whole or in part in this document.

Another decision made early in the project was to place the greatest emphasis on the formation of the regional concept and the early days of the school. To us these topics seemed most unique and are those whose history will become more difficult to retrieve as time passes.

For those who wish the visual to supplement the written word, or vice versa, David B. Lindsay, "White Oak" yearbook advisor, has produced a commemorative book featuring each of the fifty classes. We hope that through these two publications a true flavor of the school is presented.

To Jack Mahoney we offer our thanks and appreciation for his help in editing and proofreading this document while "Bunny" McGuire served as an excellent resource in gathering information.

This adventure through the years has been enjoyable, time-consuming and problematic. To those who wish you were mentioned and were not, we too wish you were. Such is the dilemma of this project! Finally, the greatest tribute is to the ambitious and energetic forebears who met a unique challenge and established this splendid institution known as HOUSATONIC.

Ed and Mary Kirby  
September 1989

## THE HOUSATONIC VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL FIFTY YEARS

"Although Dame Nature spread a heavy blanket of wet snow over the 600 men, women and school children attending the laying of the cornerstone at the new Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Canaan, yesterday afternoon, she couldn't dampen the ardor of the speakers and the enthusiasm of the audience at this momentous and historic event."

"The formal exercises, despite the unexpected avalanche of sticky snow that the strong wind drove into people's faces and covered their hats and garments, went off on schedule."

"The partially completed high school, resplendent with American flags and bunting adorning towering posts and rough timbers, also was covered with a coating of white. People, as they arrived at the structure, quickly sought covered shelters; having to plow their way over water-covered cement floors. They stood in small groups eagerly awaiting the start of the ceremonies. Chairs had been placed adjacent to the cornerstone, but only a few took chances of sitting on the wet seats."

"As word came that the exercises were ready to start, the various groups emerged from their shelters, some gathering around the speakers, others standing on the wet ground with many of the younger folks climbing onto the scaffoldings and brick casements to watch the proceedings."

"Samuel A. Eddy, chairman of the board, opened the program with a brief welcome and introduced the Rev. Lee M. Dean, pastor of the Falls Village Congregational Church, who gave the invocation in which he blessed the building and the board members for their work."

"Mr. Eddy then stated that he was very happy to have so many present on such an inclement day, and turned the program over to Howell N. White, the vice-chairman. Mr. White declared that he felt this an honor that really belonged to Mr. Eddy — the guiding spirit in the erection of this new school."

"He stated further that as this was the first regional high school in Connecticut and New England, the opportunity is great, and with that spirit in mind, this project was launched. It is our wish to make it an outstanding school, he added, and we deeply appreciate those who have helped in its success."

So stated the lead article in the April 13, 1939, issue of the Connecticut Western News, written by editor Walter R. Grannan for the occasion. In the same issue of the News, Henry Wellington Wack added the following excerpts in his editorial: "The advent of the Regional High School is of incalculable importance to all the towns it is to serve. Its cost to the State, the Town and the taxpayers is impressive. Its upkeep

and operating outlays as an institution of youth development, training and inspiration, will be quite heavy from year to year. . . . what the Regional High School Board has officially done in this instance was done only after a thorough test of all the human qualities involved in each applicant for appointment and in the teaching profession, without regard to political or social preferment."

"Moreover, the new principal is presumably a man not only of wide teaching experience, but also of administrative initiative and executive ability, alive to the needs of youth in a nervous world of tomorrows, not of decadent and outmoded yesterdays. . . . The past two decades have been a time of radical flux in American educational ideas and methods and drastic changes in school structures and their equipment, both manual and scholastic. Our new school should be as much an experimental laboratory as fixed in its instructional processes. There is nothing static in any form of life. When growth ceases, decay sets in — nothing can stand still and thrive. Nature constantly demonstrates that immutable law. . . . The new school should be an inspiration to our boys and girls striving to equip themselves for responsible participation in the life of their time. To parents it should be an object of new interest and a freshened public spirit."

The dream was realized; the dream that came about in the early 1920's when the first seeds of the concept of a regional high school began to germinate in the minds of a few imaginative individuals in our beautiful hill country. Today the Housatonic Valley Regional High School stands as a monument to those who had the foresight to bring a dream of better education to a rural setting in northwestern Connecticut.

## EDUCATION IN THE EARLY YEARS

In order to have a full understanding of the development of the regional concept, it is necessary to go back a few decades in history and view the educational structure of our towns. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the early part of the twentieth, towns were divided into school districts. The number varied from town to town. By 1873 Sharon had eighteen districts, Cornwall seventeen, Kent fourteen, Salisbury thirteen and North Canaan and Falls Village combined fourteen (It is interesting to note that in 1873 Ulysses S. Grant was president, Frederick Miles of Salisbury our representative in the U.S. Congress and the local iron industry still operated). Some of the school districts combined to provide greater educational advantages for the children. Yet they were still usually of the one-room variety. Between 1873 and 1923 all the towns gradually consolidated their districts to a greater degree.

It is impossible to determine precisely when the idea of a regional high school first surfaced since records of early discussions were not

kept. The possibility of finding a way to consolidate schools on an inter-town basis seems to have been first suggested in 1923 by William M. Teague, Rural Supervisor, later Superintendent of Schools (until 1972 the State provided a superintendent and supervisor of instruction for our six towns). The first public mention of the concept was in 1924 at a meeting of the Salisbury League of Women Voters. There, during a discussion of the problems confronting rural schools, the wish was voiced that a way should be found to allow high schools to operate in larger units. Why couldn't several towns combine their funds to develop such a school?

In attendance at that Salisbury meeting in 1924 were a few people from neighboring towns and Supervisor Teague. While the questions and suggestions presented provoked little discussion or enough interest for further pursuit, the seed had been planted. A few people began to discuss the idea with friends. While many seemed receptive to the concept, it was apparent that most felt the idea would never become reality.

Time marched on, years passed. Things tend to move slowly in these hills. William Teague continued to pursue the idea, eventually receiving support from the Director of Field Services in the State Department of Education. But two local women who were members of the League of Women Voters, and in attendance at the 1924 meeting, continued their efforts at the grass roots level. Lucille Mathews Woodward had come to Salisbury from the midwest where she was familiar with the various types of consolidated schools common in that area. Mrs. Woodward was the mother of two children whom she expected would attend public high school. With a teaching degree, boundless energy and a limitless imagination, she would become the local driving force behind the regional dream. In her *Regional History* (the story of the building of the first regional high school in New England), Mrs. Woodward states that her greatest contribution "was her complete ignorance of, and consequent failure to accept, the sanctity in which the towns hold their individual authority." She later was elected to the Salisbury Board of Education and became the first woman to represent her town in the Connecticut General Assembly.

The other woman, Alice E. Howell, the mother of four children, was a teacher by profession. Mrs. Howell is best described as enough of an idealist to be always a few steps ahead of what might appear practicable at the moment. She became a member of the Salisbury Board of Education and later served on the State Board of Education.

From these three people, Woodward, Howell and Teague, the concept started to grow — dreams, imagination and then work, hard work. More people, with increasing belief in the materialization of a plan to build a school, began to join the movement. But there were roadblocks too: the autonomy of the towns, the distance to transport students, and the condition of the roads over which they would travel — and by 1929,

the advent of the Great Depression.

One of the interesting elements in the move toward the creation of this new concept was the increase in the role played by women in public affairs. While the later activities were carried out primarily by men, it was the women of the community who provided the foundation for future development. Another factor affecting attitudes was the increased use of the automobile, allowing people to move about more efficiently, causing town line barriers to become somewhat less important. The Connecticut Rural Road Improvement Act of 1931 contributed to the betterment of the back roads of the towns and increased the opportunity for students to be within reach of school transportation routes.

During the nineteen twenties and thirties the six towns that would one day become part of Regional District Number One provided education for students in grades one through twelve. Sharon, Salisbury, North Canaan and Kent included the high school level in their studies while pupils from Falls Village and parts of Cornwall attended North Canaan High School. Many of these students rode by train on the New York, New Haven and Hartford, Berkshire Line for their education. Some students from Cornwall Bridge boarded the southbound train every morning to attend Kent High School (as many Cornwall and Kent youngsters had done in the early part of the century to attend New Milford High School).

While Salisbury, thanks to the efforts of Lucille Woodward and Alice Howell, was the forerunner in the effort to form a regional school, other towns were both concerned and planning for the future. North Canaan High School, crowded and wishing a more diversified curriculum, had set aside two mills a year in their budget as an accumulating fund to be used in the future. The fund was invested and amounted to a total of \$23,000 before it was discontinued during the Depression. Sharon High School, comprised of seventy students housed along with grades one through eight, needed more space and a broader offering of subjects. Because of the limitations a student in Sharon, failing Algebra I as a freshman, could not make up the course until the junior year. Due to enrollment many offerings could be available only on an alternate year basis. The case was very much the same in the other towns. In the southern area, Kent found it difficult and expensive to operate secondary school offerings for fewer than fifty students. In 1935 the number of high school students in each of the future regional towns remained at a very low level. Canaan (Falls Village) had twenty-three and Cornwall thirty-six. At the high school level Kent had only forty-eight students, North Canaan ninety-six, Salisbury one hundred twenty-five and Sharon seventy-five. In the four towns having high schools there was a total of nineteen teachers and a limited curriculum for over four hundred pupils.

The towns in northwestern Connecticut were not unique in the problem of dealing with maintaining high schools for low enrollments.



The problem existed in nearly all rural sections of the state. One member of the State Department of Education stated, "There was a danger of a mushroom growth of small inadequate high schools in the state." Those towns in Connecticut that had attempted to correct their situation by building a small school more often than not found it to be very costly and unsatisfactory. Other rural towns in the 1930's were finding the practice of sending students to larger towns or cities, on a tuition basis, increasingly expensive. As the larger districts increased their enrollments they also became less inclined to accept students from outlying areas. When the outlay for transportation was added, the cost of secondary education to rural Connecticut in the Depression period became quite prohibitive. It is obvious that concern about secondary education in rural areas was not peculiar to our corner of Connecticut.

Two bills introduced to the General Assembly in 1933 were not the results of the efforts of the northwestern towns. Yet those bills would have a pronounced effect on the direction taken by the school boards of our area. House Bill 113 stated that two or more towns might unite to form a school without loss of state aid. House Bill 285 provided that the State Board of Education could establish and maintain or aid in the establishment of a high school in a town or a group of towns. Bill 113 was rejected and a substitute, House Bill 285, provided that: "The State Board of Education shall prepare a plan or system under which high school facilities may be provided for small towns." The bill was passed and subsequently became Special Act 374. As a result of this legislative action, the potential for the formation of a regional school became a reality.

#### **THE FORMATION OF REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 1**

The towns of our northwest corner were not the first to take legal steps to consolidate secondary education. But it was in these towns that the first serious interest in the concept occurred. At a meeting of the Salisbury Board of Education in 1935, Supervisor William Teague suggested that the board would do well to consider consolidating with nearby towns. The board voted to invite boards of education from Canaan (Falls Village), North Canaan, Cornwall and Sharon to meet with them and discuss the matter on an informal basis. The meeting was soon held and it was voted to appoint two members of each board to study the possibilities of the project. Everyone was in agreement that action needed to be taken to alleviate the perplexing educational issues facing each town. It would be some time, though, before Kent was recognized as a possible member of the new high school district (Norfolk expressed an early interest but eventually dropped the idea, and only then did Kent move toward consolidation).

Addressing the problems created in the rejection by the 1935 General Assembly of bills that would make consolidation possible, discussion reverted primarily to the local level. Then in 1937 the General Assembly, after the defeat of Bills 712 and 83, finally adopted House Bill 1623. This bill became Special Act 428 and provided that any three or more of the towns of Canaan, North Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, Salisbury or Sharon, by vote at a town meeting, might establish a district known as Regional High School District Number 1 of Litchfield County. The dream of Supervisor William Teague, Lucille Woodward, Alice Howell and, at this point, many others, began to take on at least a bit of reality.

While the possibility of the development of a new school still seemed financially prohibitive to the towns, the preliminary committee was soon replaced by a committee composed of a representative of each town board of education. The new group was charged with planning and providing publicity regarding the probable cost of a building and projected operational costs. In addition the committee was to determine such details as site, curriculum, transportation and the formulation of plans for town meetings so a decision could be voted in the early fall. When the plan went to vote, it was in the present towns of the district: Canaan (Falls Village), Cornwall, Kent, North Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon.

During the summer of 1937 there was considerable publicity regarding regionalization in these northwestern Connecticut towns. A persuasive agenda was created to inform the citizens of the area. It was emphasized that the boards did not wish to force the plan on the people. On the other hand, the boards made it abundantly clear that they unanimously recommended the adoption of the plan as the most effective means of educating the high school students of the six towns.

Special town meetings were held between August 31 and September 8, 1937, to present the plan, answer questions and vote on the plan's adoption. In Falls Village, North Canaan and Cornwall the meeting vote was unanimous for adoption. Sharon and Kent passed the measure with a few dissenting votes. In Salisbury there had been some opposition by those who felt that with a larger number of students the town would pay an unfair portion of the cost. Action was ultimately postponed until the regular October Town Meeting at which time the measure was passed by a three-to-one margin. As a result of the favorable vote in the towns, Regional High School District Number 1 of Litchfield County became a reality.

At a meeting on October 16, 1937, the Regional School Board was formed. The first board included Samuel A. Eddy of North Canaan, who was elected Chairman; Howell N. White, Salisbury; Charles L. Gold, Cornwall; Lee H. Kellogg, Canaan; Arthur E. Hotaling, Sharon and William E. Templeton of Kent. The board, after much indecision, selected a farm in Falls Village of some seventy-five acres on the glacial terrace

and flood plain overlooking the Housatonic River as the school site. With the house and two barns the land was purchased for the sum of \$8000.

The Regional School Board set about the tasks of having the school built. Twenty-one architects were interviewed before Ernest O. Sibley was selected to develop the plan for the building. By this time building costs had risen nearly thirty percent, and it became obvious that the original estimate of two hundred thousand dollars would fall far short of the amount needed to construct the building and secure a water supply.

In April of 1938 the decision was made to apply for federal funding through the Public Works Administration. At the meeting of the Regional Board in July it was announced that the grant had been approved through the P.W.A. and W.P.A. and that the money would be available promptly. Bids were opened in September and ground was broken the following month.

### THE CORNERSTONE

When the cornerstone was laid in April of 1939, it contained a copper cornerstone box which was sealed with the following contents:

1. Copy of the 1938 Connecticut Register and Manual, autographed personally by Raymond E. Baldwin, Governor, and Sara B. Crawford, Secretary of the State.
2. Three 1938 directories of the Southern New England Telephone Company covering the six towns.
3. A silk flag of the United States of America.
4. A silk flag of the State of Connecticut.
5. Signed copies of the Legislative Act, 1937 session, creating the Regional High School District Number 1 of Litchfield County and its Amendment from the 1939 session.
6. Copy of the Report of the Treasurer, Howell N. White, showing allocation and expenditure of all funds to date.
7. Vial of earth containing samples taken from historical sites in each of the six towns.
8. Several other items including four contemporary government bulletins; photographs of the site before the school was built, the four high schools being closed, and the Regional School Board; copies of six newspapers and lists and signatures of the faculty and prospective students for 1939-1940.

\*\*\*\*\*

Henry Pozzetta - Class of 1942, former First Selectman of North Canaan.

*I wish I had been more attentive in May Camp's and Wilhemina Allyn's English classes. I would be better able to express my thoughts. However, I do remember vividly the cornerstone ceremony at HVRHS. At the time, as a wide-eyed freshman from Canaan High, I was more interested in time off from classes and a bus ride to Falls Village — not an insignificant trip for a country boy. Today I look upon that cornerstone as the Mother Lode that radiated its influence on my generation and will continue to affect generations to come.*

*Let us pray that the energies created by that cornerstone will continue to be properly channeled as they have been commencing with Paul Stoddard to the present day administration.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The building process progressed at a remarkable pace during the spring and summer. But because of some changes in the plans completion of the school at the desired date in September was impossible. It was determined that the school would open on September 25, 1939. Architect Ernest O. Sibley provided the description of the building:

“This first Regional High in Connecticut, housing as it does the beginning of an educational tradition of real significance in the State, constituted at once an inspiration and a challenge to the architect — to make the structure beautiful without subordinating its function, and economical without sacrificing quality.”

The building, of Georgian Colonial design, took advantage of the flat level of the glacio-lacustrine terrace, fifty feet above the flood plain of the Housatonic River, where the athletic fields were to be located. Since 1939 literally hundreds and hundreds of Housatonic athletes have “run the bank” as part of their conditioning. Mr. Sibley, who obviously loved the regional concept, went on in his statement to further describe the facility. It would be basically of one story with the east two-story level including a library along the front, four classrooms and the future entrance to the proposed auditorium balcony. The total plan was for a “hollow square” concept with continuous corridors, allowing travel in either direction for students moving from class to class (how well you former students must remember the regular morning ‘parade’ around the quadrangle in the early years as you greeted friends). The hollow square enclosed the foundation of the auditorium which would be built in the future.

The original first floor consisted of offices, a Commerical Department, a Homemaking Department, the cafeteria, really a multi-purpose room complete with a stage, and a service kitchen, gymnasium (which

was to become the pride of the Housatonic Valley Schoolmen's League), health facilities, shops, science and agriculture rooms, four general classrooms and a number of accessory rooms.

The second story, on the east main center, consisted of a library running the full length of the front with a fireplace at either end (how nice it was at winter evening meetings to feel the warmth of the roaring fire). Across the back were four classrooms for the English department, one with a small stage on the north end.

Student furniture in the building was for the most part Colonial reproductions and very sturdy. Many of the original desks are still in use today, fifty years later.

Outside, the distinctive building was topped by a tower and weather vane. Original plans called for a clock with dials on each of the four sides. These were scheduled to be installed when the funds became available (despite the efforts of several classes to provide the money, the clock has never become a reality). The weather vane has attached letters for the four major directions of the compass. This device apparently was never properly secured since north sometimes has a tendency to drift either east or west. But the fixture is there and it is impressive.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ed Kirby

*One of my favorite memories regarding the weather vane occurred in 1964. Miss Estey arrived in the office one morning and asked Dr. Stoddard, who of course was always behind the counter, "Which direction is that thing on the roof supposed to be pointed?"*

*Dr. Stoddard responded in characteristic fashion, "Miss Estey, in what direction would you like it to point? Just tell me and I'll have it turned for you."*

\*\*\*\*\*

The total cost breakdown for the building was:

Land, building and equipment including P.W.A. and W.P.A. money . . . . .	\$326,946
Paid by the local board on grading, sewer system, water and other items . . . . .	\$ 20,234
Total cost . . . . .	\$347,180

[It's interesting to note how times change. The cost of the original building was about eight percent of the proposed high school budget for 1989-1990 and the insured value of the buildings alone in 1989 is \$11,623,120.]

By September the semi-completed building stood majestically in the scenic valley of the Housatonic. It would not only be the seat of public education for generations to come but also a monument to those who had the vision and fortitude to develop a dream. Architect Ernest O. Sibley, and the planners he worked with, truly believed that the appreciation of beauty was an essential part of education and that the effect of beautiful surroundings would serve as a stimulus to learning.

### THE STAFF IS FORMED

Yes, the building was and is beautiful and that served as the key to a learning environment. But people are the catalyst that enables learning to happen. Education is a people business and the people that began the educational process at Housatonic were special.

The first employee hired by the Regional School Board was Custodian John B. DuBois. John would hold that post for the next twenty-five years. Paul Wakelee Stoddard was selected as principal and teacher of English. Mr. Stoddard had been a teacher of English at Bulkeley High School in Hartford and held a Bachelor of Arts from Yale and Master's from both Columbia and Yale. He immediately set to work on the search for a faculty. In all, the Board employed eighteen teachers for the first year including the four principals from the existing high schools. As Dr. Stoddard pointed out in later years, there was no lack of administrative advice in those early days. The original staff was as follows:

Wilhemine E. Allyn	Cora E. Kingsbury
Stewart A. Anderson	William R. Loring
Frederick Bauer	Charles E. Luminati
May A. Camp	Thelma E. Price
Grace E. Crofton	Frank B. Richardson
M. Edward Dakin	Harold M. Smith
Edward C. Dorsett	Ambler R. Travis
Mae E. Gesell	Gladys D. Travis
Adelaide S. Gordon	Clarke B. Wood

\* \* \*

Josephine Moore, Secretary  
John B. DuBois, Custodian  
Richard Vickers, Assistant Custodian  
Ethel J. Beers, Chief Cook  
Lena M. Lockwood, Assistant Cook  
Florence J. Tompkins, Assistant Cook

**THE OPENING OF  
THE HOUSATONIC VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

The historic day arrived; the opening of the first regional high school east of the Hudson River. The 374 students arrived to be greeted by a building in a state of incompleteness. There were no floors other than those of bare cement, no clocks, no lockers and no bells. But the students and teachers soon adjusted. For the students coming from the four small high schools the new building seemed very large indeed. But let's have Clarke Wood of the original staff tell the story as he remembers it.

\*\*\*\*\*

[Clarke B. Wood - teacher of agriculture, 1939-1970. The Clarke B. Wood Agriculture Center was named for him in 1970.]

*After much delay school finally opened on September 24, 1939. Buses pulled up to the main entrance and apprehensive students filed into the lobby. There they gazed upon the blackboard directing them to a room, to be found somewhere in this unfamiliar building. The students seemed to like what they found even if there were no clocks, no bells and no lockers, and the floors were bare concrete. New friends were found.*

*Movement to and from classes while somewhat erratic actually was smooth considering the conditions. Dismissal found students assembled by prior instructions from Paul W. Stoddard at the north, south, and main entrances. By hand signal from the principal to teacher monitors the students left and entered one of the long line of buses for home. The first exciting day was over.*

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the problems in the consolidation of schools in a rural area is that of transporting students over long distances. That difficulty was acknowledged early in the planning stages and undoubtedly was a factor in more than a few of the votes cast against the regional concept. Students in the far reaches of the Region would spend considerable time on buses each day. Those living in the hilly areas of Sharon and Cornwall, the Taconic section of Salisbury, Kent and South Kent would be especially affected. But the advantages of an expanded curriculum and total school program were to far outweigh the transportation problems.

As stated in 1939, the problem of transportation, "for the time being at least," is the responsibility of the individual towns (it is interesting to note in 1989 that the responsibility has not changed). "The time being," in these pristine hills, can be eternity. Perhaps this approach to transportation is most effective since it allows the retention of autonomy by our

six towns, each of which retains a delightful bit of that Yankee independence.

Despite the problems connected with the opening of school and a few growing pains as the year progressed, the first year was successful from an educational point of view. Specialized curricula resulting in one of five diplomas provided a much greater offering than students had experienced in the four small high schools. Diplomas awarded were College, General, Vocational Agriculture, Industrial Arts and Homemaking. For the student who did not meet the requirements of the diploma a Certificate of Attendance was awarded.

In that first year too a number of cultural and athletic activities were available to students. In athletics the emphasis was on intramural sports for boys and girls. Two boys' interscholastic sports, basketball and baseball, were offered. In basketball for the first time boys from the old high schools now played together instead of being in competition with one another. No longer was it Sharon against Salisbury or Canaan against Kent. But old habits are hard to break and time was needed to overcome the practice of passing the ball to someone from the same town. Now they were "the Regional" and the transition wasn't always easy. The basketball team won some and lost some, but the baseball team fared better, perhaps because baseball required a different type of teamwork. The 1940 baseball team, playing together for the first time, became Housatonic Valley League champions, thereby starting the trend that has made baseball Housatonic's most successful sport over the past fifty years. In other activities eleven issues of the school paper (one that would grow to an award-winning publication in the years to come) were published. A program of assemblies was established, and the senior play had productions in both the Salisbury Town Hall and the Colonial Theatre in Canaan.

For those interested in the fiscal operation of the 1939-1940 school year, the first budget came to a grand total of \$62,113.98.

### THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES

Because the completion of the building was not accomplished until late in the fall of 1939, dedication was postponed until the following spring. Then, on Saturday, June 1, 1940, the ceremonies were conducted in the gymnasium. Samuel A. Eddy, Chairman of the Regional School Board, presided over the ceremonies while the dedicatory address was given by Wilbur L. Cross, Former Governor of Connecticut. Music was provided by The Gordon String Quartet. Ernest O. Sibley presented the keys of the school and remarks were made by officials of the P.W.A., the W.P.A. and Albert I. Prince, Chairman of the State Board of Education. The entire program exhibited a blend of church and state with a



flavor no longer seen in the United States. Vocal solos included "God Bless America" and "Open the Gates of the Temple" while several of the hymns and readings were from Psalms, Proverbs and the New Testament.

In that first year the Housatonic Valley Regional High School was the recipient of a number of gifts. They included books, furnishings for rooms, landscaping, shop equipment, a flag pole and flag, flags for all classrooms, brass fire-place furnishings, watercolors and etchings, and a statue of Abraham Lincoln donated by the Hotchkiss School. "Abe" stood for forty-nine years as the guardian of the front lobby (though his "pivoting head" was occasionally turned to the rear by an early arriving student — perhaps you, one of our readers, on occasion, performed this ignominious feat before his head was permanently secured). Then in 1988, to comply with the new fire codes, "Abe" was moved to the cubicle at the north end of the front hall. Poor "Abe"; he still is the guardian of our halls, but reduced somewhat in stature by the laws of the State of Connecticut. So much for progress.

A seal was designed for the school by a local citizen. The record is not clear who the designer was; perhaps Lucille Woodward, perhaps someone else. The seal incorporated the emblem of the White Oak, then standing at the south end of the building (and still standing between the southern extensions of the 1951 and 1963 additions). Along with the emblem and design was the motto selected for the Housatonic Valley Regional High School, "Felix Prole Virum" — Blest in an offspring, wise and strong. Yes! The H.V.R.H.S. was blest, certainly as an offspring of those who were wise and strong — and as well by those people who had a vision and a dream of what could be accomplished in a new concept of rural secondary education.

By the end of the school year work on the building was complete although some grading and landscaping still needed to be done. The first Commencement took place in the gymnasium on June 21 as seventy seniors from the Class of 1940 received diplomas. Betsey R. Beardslee of Salisbury was valedictorian and John J. Sweeney, also of Salisbury, was salutatorian. The first commencement address was delivered by Dr. Robert Elliott Spear, D.D., former secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. The practice of awarding two good-citizenship prizes began at the first graduation with the awards going to Barbara Martin and Edward C. Wike, Jr.

On September 14, 1940, the State Board of Education gave formal recognition to the Regional School Board by presenting an Award of Merit. The citation stated that the Award was presented "in recognition of an outstanding contribution to public education in the establishment of Connecticut's first Regional High School."

When the second year of "Regional" began on September 4, 1940, there were a number of changes. This time the school was ready and

the confusion of the year past was but a memory. Four hundred twenty-seven students were enrolled, an increase of fifty-three students. M. Edward Dakin, a teacher of languages, had assumed the duties of vice-principal. Adelaide G. Fitts, social studies teacher, was dean of girls. Amelia St. James was selected as a part-time nurse and Jeannette M. Anderson was named librarian. Evelyn L. Fowler was appointed as a teacher of home economics. Two teachers from the original staff, William Loring and Stewart Anderson, resigned to take positions in other school districts. Custodian Richard Vickers had resigned in June and was replaced by Walter C. Doty. Thus began the era of "John and Walt", a duo that would remain for the next thirty-three years at Housatonic until the retirement of John DuBois in 1974. Unless one works as an administrator of a school no one has a full grasp of how critical the roles of custodians are in its operation. John DuBois and Walt Doty maintained the large building and grounds (and maintained them very well) by themselves for many years before additional staff were employed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Walter Doty - custodian, driver, Falls Village  
(based on an interview by Ed Kirby with Walt Doty on January 10, 1989)

*"When the school opened in 1939 it wasn't finished. John DuBois and Dick Vickers were the first custodians. John and I had worked together at The Hotchkiss School from 1930 to 1934 before I left to become the chauffeur for Clement Ford in Sharon. When Vickers . . . I never met him . . . left the high school, I was offered the job and started work there on September 1, 1940. There were still a lot of things not finished then. The foundation and stage of the auditorium had been put in when the school was built . . . we used the stage for storage, mainly for cafeteria supplies. Taking care of the building and grounds was a lot of work for two men. It was quite a number of years before another custodian came there."*

*"In the World War II years the school closed for six weeks in the winter of 1943. The boilers were converted from #4 oil to coal then. That meant that the fires needed to be stoked around the clock. Leo Winn came in at night to take care of the boilers. One Sunday morning I was down there and I heard a terrible crack! That big coal bin was broken, but it didn't come all the way over . . . if it did it would have buried me . . . man, I'm telling you, I got out of there in a hurry. On Monday they came down and moved all the coal by hand and took the pressure off."*

*"In 1959 I became the driver. The high school leased a bus and I drove for field trips and sports. Ed Kirby's baseball teams' trips were best. They won most of the time and the ride home was always noisy. It was fun driving them. I remember one day after beating Farmington we were stopped in Winsted for too much noise."*

*"Yes, Dr. Stoddard was quite a guy! He brought a lot of famous people to the high school. Eleanor Roosevelt was one who came more than once. One time when Mrs. Roosevelt was coming to the high school, I told some of the young teachers what Mrs. Roosevelt would say in her opening remarks. After the visit the teachers asked how I knew that. Of course it came from my earlier days of driving Mr. Ford, who often visited the Roosevelts in Hyde Park when I was his chauffeur."*

*"In 1975 I retired after thirty-four years at the high school . . . never could hold a job."*

\*\*\*\*\*

In the second year of Housatonic Valley Regional High School the athletic program was expanded to include the addition of soccer as a fall sport. New school equipment was purchased and improvements were made to the grounds. In honor of Board Member Charles L. Gold of Cornwall, who died in August, a white oak tree was planted. It was in the fall of 1940 too that Lucille Woodward, at the request of the commissioner of education, compiled the first history of the high school. On November 13 and 14 the second senior play was presented; the first night at the Salisbury Town Hall and the second at the Colonial Theater in North Canaan.

All the preceding items concerning the 1940-1941 school year are, of course, important parts of our history. But the most fascinating move of the year was an action taken by the Regional Board on February 14, 1941 (Valentine's Day no less). At that meeting the board passed a rule "requiring the resignation of women teachers who marry after July 1, 1941." In effect this meant that all women faculty members who were then married, or who married prior to July 1, would be retained. Those women who married after that date could teach for a full year if they wished but would be forced to resign at the conclusion of that year. The Board concluded that the break in the service of any teacher should come at the end of the school year . . . any other break, the Board decided, would be "disadvantageous" to the school. And in late 1942 the board suspended that rule "indefinitely" because of the difficulty in securing new teachers now that the country was at war. Oh, how times have changed!

Even in those early days of H.V.R.H.S. the National Honor Society was an important part of the school's culture. The National Honor Society, founded by the American Expeditionary Forces following World War I, recognized outstanding students on the basis of leadership, scholarship, service and character. The Housatonic Chapter was transferred from the old Salisbury High School to the new regional school.

## THE FIRST SCHOOL EVALUATION

On April 7 and 8, 1941, a survey by the State Department of Education was conducted under the directorship of Dr. P. Roy Brammell. Discussions were held with every member of the faculty and all aspects of the program reviewed. Dr. Brammell in his summary statement wrote the following:

"As chairman of the general evaluation committee, I found it unusually stimulating and helpful to investigate the type of educational program being offered by this newly established institution. Interest in it is widespread, and I should like at the outset to compliment the communities involved in its support of the education they are making available to the youth of this region. The regional school holds great promise as a means of improving secondary education in rural areas, and the Housatonic Valley Regional High School holds an enviable position as a pioneer in this movement. The effectiveness of the general program, even at this early stage, is unusual, although there are certain lacks and general weaknesses which exist and of which the school is fully conscious. A disposition on the part of those in charge to correct these situations gives promise of producing in the regional high school an altogether exemplary education institution."

The evaluation of nine aspects of the school's program indicated ratings of staff and buildings and grounds as very superior; instruction, administration and curriculum as superior, and outcomes of instruction as high average. Outcomes of instruction was particularly difficult to assess since the basis was determined primarily by the success of graduates who go on to institutions of high learning. A school with no past record in that department could not have a documented effort. The three remaining aspects, guidance, library and pupil activities, were not surprisingly rated low average to inferior. Guidance was to improve in the next year with the new staff structure. The appointment of a full-time librarian and the addition of books as well would begin the development of a most effective facility. But the pupil activity area presented serious problems. As Principal Stoddard pointed out in his annual report, the school day (9:07 a.m. to 3:07 p.m.) was not long enough to provide an adequate activity period on a daily basis to meet students needs. Mr. Stoddard explained the problem as one directly related to the local bus schedule being tied to the needs of the elementary schools and called again for the Regional High School to have control of its transportation system in order that adequate time might be allotted to meet the needs of high school pupils. The plight of athletes at Housatonic was one of

particular difficulty since after the late ending of practice they were expected to find their own way home. A few had cars, but many walked or hitch-hiked the long distance, adding even more time to the long trek home.

As the new era in education progressed, the old Lakeville High School building was torn down in 1940. Built in 1900, it had served as the high school until the opening of the Salisbury High School in 1929. It continued to be used for education until the opening of the regional school in 1939.

In the 1940-1941 school year the basketball team showed improvement, and the baseball team won their second league championship. At the second commencement in June eighty seniors were graduated.

By the summer of 1941 the new regional school was well on the way to becoming a center for meetings, conferences and cultural activities. In August the high school hosted the Housatonic Valley Conference. The conference, chartered by the State of Connecticut, was for the purpose of arranging and conducting conferences and open discussions which would disseminate information about various themes affecting American national life. Governor Robert Hurley opened the two-week conference and called for a development and conservation program for the great Housatonic Valley. He said the conference was an outgrowth of the old New England town meeting, which symbolized the essence of the finest democracy. Topics discussed were as diverse as North-South American Relations, Spiritual Growth in America Today, and the Problem of Rural High School Education. Here it is, fifty years later, and thoughtful people are still meeting on similar topics.

## THE WORLD WAR II YEARS

With the United States' entry into World War II in December, 1941, life in the northwest corner began to change considerably. The school became an important location for courses to train air raid wardens; courses in first aid, nutrition and emergency feeding plans were offered. While a number of former students were in uniform already, more elected to leave school during their junior or senior year to serve their country. In addition some students enlisted in the Connecticut Land Army, which was organized to help fill the deficiency in farm labor during the summer months.

For the most part we associate student strikes, sit-ins and sit-outs with the late 1960's and early 1970's. However, members of the senior class of 1942 went on "strike" on April 29, protesting the disciplining of a classmate. When the bell rang to start classes, all but one of the seniors refused to move. The following day a committee of the class met with Principal Stoddard in a special meeting of the Regional School Board.

But the principal ruled with an iron hand. By vote of the faculty all but two of the class were suspended for one day, Class Night was cancelled and no good citizenship awards were made at commencement. In addition the seniors were forced to make up the lost time in detention on the day before graduation. The detention was supervised by Mr. Stoddard himself.

One feature the Home Economics Department started in 1942 was the "Practice House." The farmhouse, known now as the "White House", was the home for custodian John DuBois and his wife. They occupied only the first floor. Home economics teacher Cora Kingsbury had the inspiration to develop the four upstairs rooms into a realistic training area for girls in the advanced "home ec" curriculum. Miss Kingsbury's concept was approved by the Regional Board, which provided the limited sum of \$250 to the cause. Students in the industrial arts classes, under the direction of teacher Wesley Winter, wired the rooms and built the kitchen designed by the home economics students. The girls did all the painting and furnishings, even making mattresses for the beds and re-finishing the furniture. When it was completed, four girls in rotation lived in with Miss Kingsbury for a week, shifting jobs daily, learning to do the tasks required in a well kept house.

This unique approach in the Practice House continued for many years on a very successful basis.

As the years went on, the school grew in stature. New programs were developed and courses were added. Faculty turnover, while always gradual, brought new faces and new skills to the staff. But the ever present war effort continued to affect life at Housatonic. The advent of gas rationing severely limited students' ability to use cars for transportation home from sports practices and other activities. Faced with total fuel limitations, the Regional Board voted to close school on January 16, 1943, for six weeks due to the shortage of fuel oil (during the next summer the boilers using #4 fuel oil were removed and coal-fired units put in their place). At the same time the six elementary schools closed for three weeks to conserve gas used in buses. At Housatonic some of the time lost was made up on Saturdays in the spring. This turned out to be an unsatisfactory solution since absences ran so high.

The War, too, continued to directly affect the size of graduating classes as more young men entered the service. The Class of 1943 had seventy graduates, 1944 fifty and 1945 sixty-one. Male graduates in 1944 and 1945 numbered only seventeen in each class.

At the commencement ceremonies in 1943 Jean Hahn Hemmerly presented the Valedictory Address. Miss Hemmerly was to become the first graduate of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School to earn a doctoral degree.

On July 6, 1944, Lucille Mathews Woodward died in the Great Hartford Circus Fire. Mrs Woodward's husband and grandson perished

as a result of the fire too. Three other grandchildren, Gerald M. Hines - '59, Charles P. Hines - '62 and Margaret Lucille Hines - '66 would go on to become Housatonic graduates. A plaque recognizing Mrs. Woodward as one of the pioneers of the regional concept is mounted in the main lobby of the school. In August of 1945 William M. Teague died and in September, Samuel A. Eddy passed away at the age of eighty-five. In the short space of little over a year, three people who were instrumental in building New England's first regional high school were gone.

## THE POST WAR YEARS

When school opened in September of 1945 World War II had just ended. Students who entered school that fall looked forward to a world with new hope. No more rationing, an abundance of heating oil and the chance to complete high school without interruption. But the scars of war were slow to heal. Many young men from Housatonic would never return to school to complete their education, and several had paid the supreme sacrifice. In addition to the students who lost their lives, Staff Sergeant Stewart Anderson, of the original faculty, was shot down with his bomber in the Southwest Pacific on January 19, 1944.

The years from 1946 to the early 1950's were to see continued growth both in program and student numbers. Martha B. Briscoe of Salisbury was elected the first woman member of the Regional School Board in 1946. Principal Paul W. Stoddard received his doctorate from Yale in 1947. Dr. Stoddard presented the "Blueprint for Progress" in the spring of 1948 to the members of the Boards of Finance, Education and Selectmen of the district. This was a comprehensive report reviewing accomplishments of the school in its nine years of existence; plans for the future in terms of enhancing educational programs and improving essential parts of the architect's design that had been postponed because of budgetary limitations. For example, there was no art department nor were there completely finished athletic fields. Specific needs anticipated in the next ten years were addressed in this report. Plans had been developed previously for the completion of the auditorium, including the balcony. Even the girders for the roof had been purchased years earlier and were stored on the site in anticipation of the completion of that facility. To accommodate increased enrollment and to be prepared for additions to the curriculum, additional classrooms and a science laboratory would be needed. Auxiliary heating equipment would be required, improvements and expansion of athletic fields, even tennis courts were proposed (as they would be many times in years to come). In addition to the auditorium the need was expressed for a shop wing including ample space for the agriculture department, a number of interior alterations and movable bleachers for the gymnasium.

In March of 1949 a hearing was held before the Connecticut House and Senate Education Committees on Education. G. Edward Byers, chairman of the Regional School Board, Dr. Stoddard, Martha B. Briscoe and C. Whittlesey Hart of the Board and several others spoke in favor of House Bill 244. This bill would permit Regional District 1 to issue bonds to the extent of \$250,000 upon approval by the towns. House Bill 244 passed and the town meetings were scheduled for May. Approval by five of the six towns was necessary to authorize the Board to begin the building process. While four towns voted in favor, North Canaan and Falls Village defeated the proposal. At a second meeting Falls Village (who voted against the issue 28-24 the first time) passed the measure 113-58. The first addition to the high school was on the way to becoming a reality.

Interest in the regional concept in general and in the Housatonic Valley Regional High School in particular continued to grow during the post-war years. In 1946 Look Magazine featured the high school in its October 1 issue. In addition many educational publications and other journals in other states carried articles concerning this unique approach to rural education. Numerous Connecticut towns studied the plan, visited Housatonic and began to work toward the concept of regionalization. In 1948 a special commission of the Massachusetts Legislature, concerned with the quality of education in rural areas, visited the high school. Since there were, at that time, 119 towns without high schools in Massachusetts, the need for some form of consolidation was critical. An editorial in the Boston Globe in May of 1949 commented favorably on H.V.R.H.S. and its programs and endorsed the bill before the legislature that would authorize the formation of regional districts.

From the beginning the cultural aspects of the school were of paramount importance. Each graduating class produced a senior play, always well received by the community. Music became an important part of the activities program, growing as the years passed. The athletic program rose to greater heights too during the post-war years. Americo Bedini, who joined the staff in 1946, was the coach of basketball and baseball and in 1947 introduced six-man football to Housatonic (Housatonic lost the first game played, but Milton Clay of Cornwall scored the first touchdown, with the second score on a pass from Ross Grannan to fellow townsman John O'Hara from North Canaan). Ambler Travis remained as coach of track.

### HOUSATONIC'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

The tenth anniversary of the opening of the school was held on Sunday, October 23, 1949. Seven hundred sixty people jammed the gymnasium to observe the impressive ceremonies. The gym was deco-



rated with flags and large bouquets of chrysanthemums. Dr. Paul W. Stoddard, of course, presided over the celebration. Speakers included G. Edward Byers, Chairman of the Board; Dr. Stoddard, who briefly reviewed the history of the school; C. Frank Hitchcock of the first graduating class and representative to the General Assembly; William B. Barnett, first selectman of Salisbury and a member of the State Board of Education; Commissioner of Education Dr. Finis E. Engleman and John E. Marshall, Director of the Massachusetts School Building Commission. The anniversary address was given by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, widow of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At that time Mrs. Roosevelt was serving as Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Mrs. Roosevelt came to the school as the result of a promise to Dr. Stoddard some four years before. Her interest in the uniqueness of the school, its close proximity to her home in Hyde Park and the general interest locally in the United Nations were compelling reasons for her coming to Housatonic.

In her address Mrs. Roosevelt told the students in attendance, "The more education you get the better able you will be to make the nation a factor in the fight for peace . . . God gives you vision and courage. The hopes of several generations of battlers for peace may be carried out in your generation."

The Tenth Anniversary program included a piano prelude by Marianne Bartram and the "Coronation March," the singing of tenor George Matthews and Elsa Borg Gillette, and the rededication of the school led by William Worthington of Kent, vice-chairman of the Board. Sitting as part of the ceremonies were the faculty, members of the senior class, the Student Council, students of the National Honor Society, students achieving High Honor Roll status the previous year and presidents of the clubs. Following the exercises a reception was held in the library for Mrs. Roosevelt. That part of the program, by the students of the Home Economics Department, included a large H.V.R.H.S. birthday cake.

Perhaps the events of the day, the program and Mrs. Roosevelt's address, were summed up best in a letter to the Lakeville Journal in the November 3, 1949 issue:

To the Editor:

It was a wonderful afternoon we all spent in the Housatonic Valley Regional High School on Sunday, October 23. And it is a great satisfaction to think that the idea which brought forth the birth and fruition of the first regional high school in New England was, in its small way, a precursor of the thoughts that culminated in the United Nations and eventually will give us a united world.

Much gratitude is due to Dr. Stoddard, the Regional School Board, the faculty, the students and the native and visiting speakers, for the inspiring, constructive and well worked out program and entertainment.

I think we all went home with hope in our hearts for the future of our young people.

Sincerely,

Millicent Warner  
(Salisbury)

In December of 1949 the high school was evaluated by forty visiting educators under the auspices of the State Department of Education. A large number of areas including the school plant, homemaking and agriculture, the citizenship program through the social studies department, the principal's senior psychology course and the proposed additions to the school were given very high ratings. The committee recommended that the school further consider making greater use of the facilities through a longer school day. Also recommended were an additional member for the administrative staff, expansion of the music program, the addition of art to the curriculum and facilities for students with learning disabilities. The following summer the Board voted to lengthen the school day by rearranging the bus schedule with the elementary schools. This move, to begin in September, would increase school time by nearly 17%. Other recommendations from the evaluation committee would be addressed by the addition to the building.

The plans for the first addition to the Housatonic Valley Regional High School were nearing completion by the spring of 1950. Architects Ernest O. Sibley and Ernest Sibley, Jr., had been at work during the winter incorporating recommendations made by the principal and the staff.

In the fall of 1950 numerous schools around the nation took part in a test sponsored by Life Magazine. Included in the five hundred schools selected were Housatonic and the six region elementary schools. The "Life" test was designed to measure the tangible qualities that make for a good school. H.V.R.H.S. scored very high nationally and was rated in the "Best Schools" category.

At a special meeting in September of 1950 Arthur E. Hotaling of Sharon resigned his position on the Regional Board. Mr. Hotaling was the last member from the original board. He maintained his interest in the school and attended commencement exercises for many years.

The Adult Education Program, still going strong today, began in September of 1950. While the Vocational Agriculture Department had provided adult education for some time, and several courses were available in other topics, this was the first attempt at offering a full

two-semester program. Courses included topics both in practical and academic/cultural disciplines. Warren C. Clarke, of the social studies department, was appointed Director of Adult Education and given the title of Vice-Principal in Charge of Adult Education.

Work progressed on the addition to the school through the next year. These things seem always to take longer and cost more than anticipated. The so-called "1951 addition" was not fully completed until the opening of the auditorium on December 12, 1952. The classroom and shop wing opened some nine months earlier and along with other building renovations greatly increased the student capacity of the school. The auditorium, built on the foundation poured with the original building, had seats for 626. Of that number the balcony, off the second floor entrance, had seats for 180. Now Housatonic had a well equipped facility that could hold many more than the total student body of 473. The total cost of the additions, including the revamped athletic fields, was \$450,000 and the high school operating budget for 1951-1952 topped \$176,000.

\*\*\*\*\*

Polly Calhoun - Cornwall resident.

*"How exciting and advanced the ideas of Regional High School District number one were. Imagine, the first regional high school to be conceived of, in New England. And look how many there are now. My father, William E. Swift, was on the Regional board, and I was on the local board. I remember how excited he was when they had solved the problem of the auditorium. They knew they wanted one but did not have enough money. So they laid the plans for the auditorium inside the building, bought the steel girders, and stored them inside the classroom complex, until some years later when they could raise the money to build the auditorium itself.*

*I think it was at the meeting to approve the building of the auditorium when Jack Briscoe, in pleading for its construction, made his classic remark about how the events that would take place on the stage would enlarge the marriage market. I do not know when the Briscoes moved to Lakeville, perhaps they were here before 1938. I know she was on the high school board with my father.*

*I remember one of the arguments put forth against regionalization was 'What would you do with the libraries from the old high school in Canaan?'"*

\*\*\*\*\*

Inspired by the success of Regional High #1 and the endorsement of the regional concept by the state, other regional districts were formed in Connecticut. Because of prohibitive costs regions #2 and #3 never built high schools though they did pool resources and share buildings.

Then in October of 1952 Valley Regional High School (the towns of Chester, Essex, and Deep River in the lower Connecticut Valley) was dedicated as the second regional high school in the state. Interestingly, Ernest O. Sibley was the architect for that school. Attending that dedication from Housatonic as honored guests were Dr. Stoddard and Oliver F. Eldridge. Housatonic now was no longer the 'only' regional high school but it was still Number 1.

### THREE-FOLD DEDICATION HELD AT HOUSATONIC

In January of 1953 a celebration dedicating the new auditorium and the organ was held and coincided with the fifteenth anniversary of the school's existence. A tablet was affixed to the organ, which was dedicated in honor of the young men of the Regional High School who served the armed forces of the United States during World War II and the Korean War, and particularly in memory of four graduates who gave their lives in active service: Edward Henry Clark of Salisbury, Orrin Edward Hallock of Kent, Roscoe William Harvey of Salisbury and Sidney Shoifet of Sharon. There were two "firsts" at the commencement of the class of 1953. The commencement address was given for the first time by a woman, Helen Kenyon, who was former Moderator of the Congregational-Christian Churches and resident of Cornwall. This was also the year that the Community Award of Merit was instituted. The citation was to be presented each year to a resident of the regional community whose contributions to society had been made in the larger community of the nation or the world. The first award of merit went to Emma Bailey Speer, whose life had been dedicated to world service in foreign missions and in the Young Women's Christian Association. Miss Speer was a resident of Salisbury.

At the end of the 1953 school year, Frank B. Richardson retired. "Ricky," who had come to the original staff from North Canaan High School, was a particular favorite of students and staff. He taught chemistry and physics and served as senior homeroom teacher in his fourteen years at Regional.

The athletic program in 1954 reached its highest peak to date. Both the first eleven-man football team and the baseball team were undefeated. Outstanding seasons were also enjoyed by track and basketball.

The expanded music program under the direction of William J. Meder enjoyed a banner year as well. Performance groups now included the junior and senior bands, the dance band, orchestra, the Barber Shoppers (later Sharpers), mixed chorus and the girls glee club. Each year Mr. Meder's students participated in the annual All-State Music Festival held in Hartford.

Through these early years of the high school there was an interesting sprinkling of cultural events for the student body in the form of as-

semblies. Other aspects of the educational process were the various clubs that offered unique opportunities for students and teachers to get together on a basis different from the classroom. The Drama Club, French Club, Art Club, the Science Club and the Latin Club were among those that afforded students a feeling of "belonging" and an opportunity to develop leadership, cooperation and a practical sense of purpose. Intramural sports for both girls and boys stressed the importance of participating in a variety of sports. The interscholastic sports program was geared for those who were able to compete on a higher level of athletic endeavor. Allied Youth was concerned with the problem of alcohol in connection with young people. The annual conference at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, was attended each year by a large number of students.

The Citizens' Council on Education promoted constructive thought and information about the high school and served as a public relations arena between the schools of the district and the families which they served. Topics discussed in the fall of 1953 focused on the curriculum, its nature and purpose.

During the fifties the Alumni Association functioned with at least an annual meeting, election of officers and the awarding of a \$100 scholarship to a graduating senior who would be entering the field of education. In the summer of 1954 there was an Alumni Dance held at the high school with two alumni dinners preceding the dance, one held in Salisbury and the other in Canaan.

At the end of the 1954 school year Americo "Ben" Bedini left to take a position as coach of football and baseball in Rye, New York. Roland Chinatti came on board as director of athletics and coach of varsity football and basketball. Edward Kirby became varsity baseball coach while continuing as assistant in football and basketball. Ambler Travis continued as mentor of the track team.

In April of 1955 May A. Camp, a teacher of English and Latin at the high school since its opening, announced her retirement effective at the end of the year. Mrs. Camp taught two generations of students at Canaan High School before coming to Housatonic. Her retirement ended nearly forty years of teaching and outstanding service to the students of the northwest corner. For years Mrs. Camp had been advisor to the Latin Club and supervised the annual joint presentation (the Roman Festival) with the Dramatic Club.

In order to avoid the situation of having the school over capacity, as it had been in the early nineteen fifties, the seven boards of education began long range planning discussions in 1955 (educational specifications usually determine capacity as 80% of all student stations filled at any given period). The rise in school age population, and the projections that followed, indicated that the old and new facilities would be inadequate by 1962. For the first time boards discussed the formation of a regional junior high school.

## THE FLOOD OF 1955

In August of 1955 Hurricane Diane, its high winds abated, stalled over New England for three days. During her pause, Diane dumped fourteen inches of rain in northwestern Connecticut. While the results were much more devastating to the towns of the Naugatuck Valley, the Housatonic River overflowed its banks to a level not seen in recent history. Although the football field was just above the high water mark the lower athletic fields were completely flooded. At the peak of the flood the baseball dugouts were submerged and the water was two thirds of the way up the backstop. Thanks to the contouring of the fields none of the surface was eroded by the rushing waters of the Housatonic but when the flood subsided huge piles of sand remained. Because of the enormity of the job removal of sand was not completed until the following summer. The 1956 baseball team was forced to practice and play home games at Veterans' Field in Sharon. The inconvenience seemed to have little effect on the team as they eventually reached the finals of the state tournament.

In the spring of 1956 Roger Clapp of Falls Village, a senior at Housatonic, became the first student from the school to be awarded a full National Merit Scholarship. Only 525 students were so recognized nationally out of 1,300,000 in competition for the scholarships. In the same year the high school was again evaluated by the state department of education. Housatonic again received high ratings.

Long range planning regarding school expansion continued. In May of 1957 Dr. Nicholas Engelhardt, educational consultant, spoke to a large assembly of educators, board members and lay people reminding them if they decided on building tomorrow it would be five years before the facility would be ready for use. The pressure was on to move more quickly.

On the athletic fields pitcher Tom Parsons (Class of '57) of Lakeville excelled and in 1963 became the school's first major league baseball player.

## THE GREAT BIOLOGY DEBATE

The great biology course debate erupted in 1958 although it seems that some seeds of discontent were sown a year or two before. During the spring a committee had been appointed to review the course. Independently an informal complaint was lodged regarding the subject matter in the course, particularly the unit on human reproduction. At that point the committee also reviewed that portion of the curriculum in detail, including a study of what other schools in the state were teaching and what materials were used. Interest in the controversial subject matter

spread to the towns, where meetings were held to discuss the topic. The controversy was well covered in the press and a number of editorials written. The report of the committee, with recommendations, was approved by five regional board members and rejected by the Kent representative.

At the following board meeting in December over 200 people were in attendance. Several letters were read expressing different points of view and comments made from the floor. The board member from North Canaan presented a petition against the course with 476 names and indicated that he had received 134 letters opposing the course as it was designed and 17 in support. Finally, after considerable heated debate, the Board voted on a resolution to accept the committee report with two added recommendations. The first would require the committee and the Board to continue to assess the course by obtaining input from professionals in child guidance, health education, psychology, medicine and allied fields in the teaching of human reproduction. Secondly, public meetings would be scheduled to inform parents and other interested individuals of the opinion received from specialists based on the first recommendation. After further discussion the report passed by a 3-2 vote with the representatives from Kent and North Canaan opposing the report.

Letters pro and con to the editors of the local paper increased, and clergy in many of the churches presented additional sermons on the topic. The majority of the letters to the newspapers supported the action of the Board, one going so far as to make reference to the "strange Medieval-like events" transpiring in the community.

The biology controversy went on for some time in the regional district. Eventually it was resolved but, of course, not to the satisfaction of all. Much of the debate tended to be more political and personal than academic. A hysteria of sorts seemed to prevail over the attempts at solutions. Long after the controversy, the wounds took a long time to heal. For some they would never heal.

### THE ENGELHARDT REPORT

Throughout the great controversy concerning the biology course, the firm of Engelhardt, Engelhardt, Legget and Cornell was busy preparing a report for the Regional Board. This report, based on a series of surveys by the consultants, was to make recommendations to solve the building needs of the regional district created by the increase in pupil numbers. The first part of that report was presented at a joint meeting of all the boards and school principals.

The report was long and detailed, necessitated by the need to address not only the high school but the six elementary schools as well.

The major focus of the Engelhardt Report, though, dealt with the high school. The board was urged immediately to prepare to have bills presented to the general assembly to make enlargement of the secondary school possible. The Engelhardt firm reported that the best solution to the growing student population problem would be to develop two six-year high schools in the regional district. One school would be developed by the enlargement of the current building while the other would be built in the Cornwall Bridge area. The location of the second facility would reduce the long distance that Kent students traveled by bus each day (there had been a small movement two years earlier in Kent for the town to build its own high school for the same purpose).

Two months later the joint boards went on record as favoring expansion of the high school with consideration of a 6-3-3 or 6-6 plan in "some future time." A long period of debate ensued with various town groups supporting one plan or another.

When the 6-3-3 plan finally went to referendum in the towns in May of 1960 the results were as follows:

Canaan	42 against	113 in favor
Cornwall	341 against	103 in favor
Kent	369 against	65 in favor
North Canaan*		
Salisbury	702 against	248 in favor
Sharon	469 against	138 in favor

\*Voted not to go to referendum based on standing vote at town meeting.

It was very obvious the citizens of the area wished to continue with the 8-4 system and keep seventh and eighth grade students in the local schools. A twelve-member planning and building committee, headed by Francis Howe of Falls Village, was formed, resulting in a preliminary design consisting of 36,000 additional square feet for the main building and an agricultural center of 5,276 square feet. By November a contract was signed with the architectural firm of Russell, Gibson and Von Donlen. When the final vote was held to determine if an addition should be built, only North Canaan dissented. The total vote on the bond issue of \$1,290,000 in the six towns was 1,544 for and 944 against.

There were many academic successes and activities in that period as well. Sadly, these successes were often lost in the district politics of the period.

\*\*\*\*\*

Steve Blass, Class of 1960 - Pittsburgh Pirates 1964-1973

*"Recollections of a seventeen-year career at H.V.R.H.S. which only seemed like four."*

*"I can still remember how intimidating the baseball program was at 'Regional' (which was what most of us called it then) when I started*



back in 1956. The success, the former players and especially the lineage of coaches — Kirby, Bedini, Ivan the Terrible, Attila the Hun, et al. All that and then you received a 1,500 page manual on how to play the game that had to be memorized in seventeen minutes.”

“In spite of this I was still optimistic until I realized that there were dozens of Lambs and Parsons ahead of me who would have to graduate before I got my chance. Cleverly, I married one of them (on the female side) and that helped.”

“Seriously, I’ve always maintained that I couldn’t have possibly been in a better atmosphere or program to be prepared for a career in professional baseball. Ed Kirby’s approach to the sport . . . his love for the game, competitive spirit and dedication . . . helped me as much as anything I can think of, both in attempting to get to the big leagues and staying there.”

“P.S. The rides to school with Dr. Stoddard were great too.”

\*\*\*\*\*

There were many outstanding athletes in addition to Steve Blass. One in particular who stood out was track star Stephen Bornemann who received state recognition as a runner in track and cross country. His Housatonic record for the mile run still stands today.

The direction had been determined but there was still a long way to go . . . more editorials, letters, packed board meetings and time. Controversy developed concerning the proposed lecture hall, the vo-ag building and the Regional Schools Services Center in particular. Clearly, many of the dissenting voices that erupted during the biology debate were still very much alive.

\*\*\*\*\*

C. Arthur Eddy - former Regional Board member, Salisbury

“My most vivid memories of my time on the Regional High School Board are:

. . . of the marvelous roast beef sandwiches that Del Eads used to bring to us from the Bull’s Bridge Inn when we had some of those late afternoon dinner hour meetings.

. . . of a ride to some meeting somewhere with Bob Terrall and Bob Fisher and having Bob Terrall asking Bob Fisher of a way to carry out the ‘perfect murder’ . . . he was stuck on a novel he was writing and needed a ‘way’ for his villain to perform such an act. (I do not remember what the suggestion was).

. . . of a meeting of the Committee To Study If We Should Form a Committee To Study Regionalization K-12 during which we were reading a report from a similar committee that had been formed at WAMOGO

*Regional H.S. I had, for many years, assumed the 'WAMOGO' was an Indian name and I can remember letting out an outlandishly loud exclamation when I read the heading on the report which indicated that The WARREN-MORRIS-GOSHEN Regional School District blah . . . blah . . . blah . . .*

*I am sure that we did carry out some worthwhile business during my tenure . . . in fact I am proud of the fact that it was during that period that leaves with pay were instituted (if my memory serves me correctly) . . . but the times mentioned above seem to have hung in my memory . . . something like my curve ball."*

\*\*\*\*\*

After the resignation of Roland Chinatti to take a position in Hawaii, Edward S. Tyburski joined the faculty in the fall of 1961. Mr. Tyburski was appointed teacher of physical education and coach of football and basketball. Today, twenty-eight years later, he is the senior member of the teaching staff.

In February of 1962 Dr. and Mrs. Stoddard were involved in a serious automobile accident. Dr. Stoddard was critically injured, suffering multiple fractures of the left arm, hip, leg and ribs as well as internal injuries. Mrs. Stoddard also was seriously injured.

During the winter and spring progress continued on the south classroom wing addition of the building. In the summer work began on the north end of the building as the renovations were completed on the existing facility. The new gymnasium was officially opened on January 18, 1963, in a ceremony conducted by Joseph Fraser, president of the student council, physical education instructors Edward Tyburski and Phyllis Dodd and Edward Kirby, Director of Athletics. After the considerable efforts of many people and a number of setbacks (including a 12% cut in size of the original plan for the gymnasium) the addition was complete. Now Regional District 1 could again boast of an updated facility that would adequately house students for years to come. But, alas, the tennis courts were cut once more.

In September of 1962 the high school "adopted" a little girl, Loida Felix, from the Phillipine Islands. For years after, the student body contributed to Loida's well being, helping to support her until she reached the age of sixteen. Loida rewarded the students by writing regularly, telling of the food and clothing purchased with the money sent her.

And Harold M. Smith of the original staff retired from the business department.

\*\*\*\*\*

Joseph T. Fraser, Class of 1963

*As I walked through the towering pillars and entered the cavernous lobby of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School for the first time*

*in September of 1959, I was filled with anxiety. My eyes were immediately drawn to the statue of "Abe" as he loomed above the mass of noisy humanity that passed below. Not wanting to seem in awe and give away my rank as a lowly freshman student, I averted my eyes from the likeness of our 16th President only to find I was making eye contact with thousands of people I'd never seen or met . . . What followed in the next four years is difficult to describe . . . To help jog my memory I picked up the four "White Oak" yearbooks I have and took the plunge. I dove back twenty-nine years in time. In reviewing my life at HVRHS I also renewed a feeling of long ago.*

*The array of photos of those years demonstrate the many great times that we experienced. Those times of studying together, working together, and playing together weren't earth shattering for the moment but contributed in building foundations for the future. I recall my days at HVRHS as happy ones — which I think was a healthy attitude — an attitude I'd like my children to have as well.*

*On a warm evening in June of 1963 I once again surveyed the lobby of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School. It no longer seemed cavernous, and yet, it held countless fond memories of a generation before, the present, and would continue to collect them for many generations to come. I knew that I was a part of many of the memories that were there — I felt good about that — I was part of HVRHS's history and I knew that Housatonic would always be a part of me . . .*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **PRINCIPAL FLIES AROUND THE WORLD IN 83 HOURS**

On Thursday, March 26, 1964, Dr. Stoddard boarded an airplane at New York's Kennedy Airport at 7:30 in the evening. Friday was a school holiday. At 9:55 on Monday morning he was back in school, conducting an assembly where he told staff members and students of the first 'round the world trip on scheduled airlines. His stops included Paris, Rome, Beirut, Karachi, Calcutta, Rangoon, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Honolulu and Los Angeles. Along the way Dr. Stoddard found time for a brief visit with two former American Field Service exchange students and the Chinatti's in Hawaii.

The Regional School Board voted at the April 1964 meeting to name room 119 in the new wing in honor of the late Eleanor Roosevelt. The student council presented a plaque for the ceremony. Mrs. Roosevelt had visited Housatonic several times, including those as the guest speaker at the tenth anniversary and the National Honor Society induction in 1958. Flags were later placed in the room representing countries that joined the school in the A.F.S. program. At the same board meeting Keith S. Bond and John L. Mahoney were appointed to the staff. Both

would go on to have a profound effect on the school. Two additions were made to the athletic program with wrestling and ice hockey becoming minor sports.

In the 1964-65 and 1965-66 school years the student population continued to grow. The senior classes were the last two of the post World War II "baby boom" with most of the students born in 1947 and 1948. The class of 1966 could boast of being the largest to date, totaling 171 graduates. Athletics continued to be successful in those two years as the cross country and baseball teams won the Northwest Conference Championships in 1964-65. The next year fine seasons were posted by cross country, basketball, track and baseball. Near the end of the season, Donald Atkins of Salisbury became the only person in Housatonic history to pitch a perfect game. In a game against a strong hitting Simsbury team, Don retired all twenty-seven batters faced.

### **DR. PAUL W. STODDARD RETIRES**

Despite the new additions, academic achievements, music and dramatic productions, and athletic successes, the number one news item of 1966 occurred in the spring when Dr. Stoddard announced his retirement effective at the end of the school year. After twenty-seven years at the helm of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School it seemed inconceivable that he would no longer be principal. Granted, the last years since his accident had been difficult for him and he found the day-to-day duties to be increasingly arduous. Dr. Stoddard announced his plan to stay active in education, both state-wide and locally. As a life long Democrat he ran that year as a candidate for representative to the Connecticut General Assembly (from the then 173rd District) and won the nomination.

The Regional School Board quickly went to work, under the guidance of Superintendent of Schools William J. Nolan, in the search for a new principal. By May the list was narrowed to seven candidates. After final interviews with all seven, at a special meeting in June, Edward M. Kirby was selected for the position. Mr. Kirby was a graduate of Housatonic (Class of 1945). After graduating from the Engineer School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, he served in the U.S. Army Engineers, including duties in Japan, Okinawa and other various Ryukyus Islands. He graduated from the Teacher's College of Connecticut. His master's degree in administration was earned at the University of Hartford. Since 1951 Mr. Kirby had served in Regional District 1 as a teacher of mathematics, physical sciences, social studies, coach and athletic director. Very active in all aspects of school life, Mr. Kirby had received the positive recommendation of Dr. Stoddard to succeed him.

PAUL WAKELEE STODDARD  
1903-1966

On July 2, 1966, Dr. Paul Wakelee Stoddard died in the Sharon Hospital after continued physical problems. A holder of three degrees from Yale he was a teacher of English at Seymour High School for three years, eleven years a teacher of English at Hartford's Bulkeley High School and at times an instructor at the University of Newark and Columbia University. He had been an administrator first, but also a teacher, in the early days in senior English and later in his well known psychology course.

On Dr. Stoddard's death a memorial service was held at the high school. Chairman of the Board Robert L. Fisher keynoted the ceremony. The memorial address at the service was given by Dr. Mark Van Doren. Perhaps the most significant statement regarding Dr. Stoddard was that written for the memorial program by the Chairman of the English and Language Department, Donald G. Kobler:

**PAUL WAKELEE STODDARD:**

*His dedication to life released him from the fear of death. Giving to every day the full resources of his mind, his body, and his spirit, he left no time for dying.*

*To the community he gave, above all, the Housatonic Valley Regional High School which he served as principal from the time of its inception. He created an institution that has educated over 2,500 men and women during the twenty-seven years of its existence. He brought to the school, in a very real and personal sense, an awareness of the larger community of men. No local problem was too small to claim his attention. No affair of the world was too big to be beyond his reach. His roots were deep in the northwestern corner of Connecticut, but he was ever a citizen of the world. It was this special quality of the man — his capacity both for fine detail and for large concepts — that endowed the school he loved with his own distinctive character.*

*He made abundantly clear that his greatest satisfaction came from the knowledge that he had been of personal help to hundreds of young people. No statistical summary of the financial aid he personally advanced to those in need and no testimonial to the counsel he gave to those in trouble could measure the extent of his service. Even with the approach of so-called retirement, he not only continued to serve the youth of the area, but he was also involving himself in new projects to extend his usefulness.*

*Paul Wakelee Stoddard will be remembered by many people for many things: his exceptional memory, his fondness for ceremony, his inexhaustible energy, his love of travel, his sense of humor, his loyalty to his friends, his deep concern with community affairs, his firm religious convictions. He gave more of himself because he was capable of more than most of us are. He gave us all he was capable of, and greater love has no man than this.*

*--Donald G. Kobler*

\*\*\*\*\*  
Barbara Bornemann - former Regional Board member, Falls Village

*"My nine years on the Board were challenging and gratifying. There was the growth of the AFS program; the Engelhardt survey; the defeat of the 6-3-3 plan and the addition to the building; the biology controversy; formation of the Citizens' Council on Education and the orientation forums for parents. Less public were a series of informative discussions of curricula between Faculty and Board. In my early days the Board met in the principal's office with Dr. Stoddard as recording secretary. As the public became more interested and aware of their role in education, the meetings became more formal and were held in a classroom in order to accommodate visitors.*

*In those days Dr. Stoddard was Regional High School District #1. No facet of the academic program, administrative detail or building maintenance escaped his vigilance. No correspondence left the office that was not letter-perfect. He was a formidable adversary but I found him receptive to ideas that would enhance the image of his school. His discipline was strict but generally fair. One year, concerned lest the diminutive exchange teacher from England have difficulty controlling her class, he assigned her a room near his office. With surprise and amusement he later told the Board that she had no problem: she spoke so softly the students had to be quiet to hear her.*

*With experience and age, Dr. Stoddard became less imperious and more vulnerable, but his devotion to Regional never diminished. The lights in his office burned late into the night."*

\*\*\*\*\*

One of the fine qualities of Dr. Stoddard had been his ability to bring outstanding and interesting people to the school. The list of commencement speakers and Community Award of Merit recipients alone reads like a 'Who's Who'. In the years before television became readily available in these hills, Dr. Stoddard always scheduled student as-

semblies of high quality. In the early years the young people of Housatonic were treated to Neff The Magician (who suspended people in mid-air), Westinghouse and General Electric futuristic shows, authors, musicians, drama, gymnasts, jugglers and many other mediums. But one assembly just before Christmas in 1959 stands out in particular. At that time Dr. Stoddard introduced seventy-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon Douglas of, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" fame. Mrs. Douglas, at that point a retired educator with a PhD., recounted the story of her famous letter to the New York Sun and the editorial response in 1897. The editorial by Francis Pharcellus Church has become a classic in American journalism. As was the case with most of Dr. Stoddard's assemblies, this one was enjoyed by students and teachers alike.

### A NEW ERA AT HOUSATONIC

The date was July 1, 1966. An era of education at Housatonic had ended and a new one began. The newly named principal, Edward M. Kirby, was faced with putting all the records in order as a result of the untimely death of Dr. Stoddard. The efforts of the new principal and the secretarial staff continued through the summer of 1966, seven days a week. But when school opened in September all was ready.

\*\*\*\*\*

Vincent J. Peppe, D.V.M., former Regional Board member,  
North Canaan

*"I first met Dr. Paul Stoddard when I heard his committee wanted the local schools to stop at 6th grade and have the 7th and 8th grade pupils bused to Falls Village where a 7-8-9th Junior High School would be built next to the present high school. A group of us including Charlotte Reid and the late Harry Beligni wanted to keep the 8 grades in the towns as always. We were divided into 2 groups — the 6-6 and 8-4's — a regional vote was taken, and the towns voted to keep the first 8 grades at home.*

*I read where this is again being discussed. I am still in the 8-4 group and for the same reasons. Educationally there may be advantages but for the social and emotional development of the students, I like them to be older before they are regionalized.*

*I became a member of the HVRHS Board about the time Ed Kirby became principal. Dr. Stoddard always kept the door from his office to the school lobby closed and the room was stacked with books. One of the first things Ed Kirby did was clear out the room and fling open the door and it was always open. There were two nice soft chairs in there I had never seen before. I used them often when I discussed school matters with Ed. I always considered this Ed's 'open door' policy.*

*I also was there when Dick Alto was hired and he and Ed made a good combination. Dick had more time to spend with the individual students. One time when they were going to expel three North Canaan students, I worked with the students and Dick and they all graduated. Such a person was Dick.*

*A good comprehensive high school prepares students best for later life. I consider HVRHS such a school."*

\*\*\*\*\*

The late nineteen sixties were a period of change. The country was changing and the world was changing. Schools were challenged to meet those changes and prepare students for a different world after graduation. Problems facing graduates had mushroomed and students began to concern themselves with the pollution of the environment, exhaustion of natural resources, control of technological advances, the crisis of war and peace, outer space, changing moral codes and nuclear control. Not only was there more to learn, there were more Housatonic students involved in the learning process. By 1966-1967 the enrollment had grown to 646.

Students had been encouraged to take a more positive part in school, community and world affairs. One of the school's successes came through student involvement in the Peace Corps School-to-School program. With administrative and faculty help, and under the student leadership of Senior Class President JoAnne Luminati, the high school accepted the task of financing the building of a school in India. In less than three weeks, over eleven hundred dollars was raised to enable the Peace Corps to build a school in the little village of Kuntloor.

Financed by federal and state funds the first Title I program at Housatonic started in the fall of 1966. This model, designed for disadvantaged students, was to provide academic assistance primarily in the language arts. Through the use of individualized instruction and team teaching, the offerings also included social studies, mathematics and science.

While students were being prepared for a variety of future endeavors the number choosing college remained high as 67% of the class of 1967 went on to some form of higher education.

Change continued to be the focus in the next year. Computer scheduling was introduced to provide more flexibility. The activity period, long located in the middle of the day, was moved to the end with a split dismissal. Girls' interscholastic athletics finally became a reality, and improvements were made in the Parents' Night, College Night and Parent Conference programs. The school in Kuntloor was completed, and with extra funds raised by Housatonic students, another school in Agadalanka, India, was finished.



Superintendent of Schools William J. Nolan left Regional District I in 1968. Dr. Nolan, a dedicated and innovative educational leader, had served the region for ten years in his assignment from the Connecticut Rural Services Bureau. His new position was with the State Department of Education in Hartford.

\* \* \* \* \*

Robert Terrall - former Regional Board member, Cornwall

*“Good — a chance to say a word about Dr. William Nolan, superintendent from 1959 to 1968, easily the most brilliant, innovative, efficient educator I’ve ever encountered anywhere. In those days impecunious, backward districts like ours were supplied with superintendents by the benevolent state of Connecticut, which took Nolan back, finally, to head some ridiculous educational department. He died soon afterward, I hope not because of the seventy-hour weeks he put in here in Region One.*

*I remember seeing an adulatory piece about Housatonic which appeared many years ago in the long-defunct magazine Look. There, among the girls in their funny haircuts and pleated skirts, was a youthful Paul Stoddard, imposing even then although skinny as a beanpole. When Nolan arrived, Dr. Stoddard was still ruling the high school with an iron hand, and the new superintendent had to tread warily until Stoddard was persuaded of his ability. Nolan had to contend with seven separate school boards (later with eight), two bargaining units, innumerable faculty and board committees, and he handled us all with grace and agility. True, he had some high-quality boards. This is easy for me to say because in my eighteen years I can only recall one split vote; everything else was unanimous. (After a season of broken bones, including one neck, Dr. Stoddard suggested that we eliminate football at the high school, and mine was the single vote in favor.)*

*Nolan had the irritating habit of reminding us constantly that Housatonic sits at the center of a ring of a half dozen excellent private schools, which compete against us for our most promising eighth graders. There are public high schools not far away, in Massachusetts, which have pulled out of this competition altogether, no longer making even a minimum pretense of preparing students for college. Once the downward spiral begins, it is a hard thing to reverse. It is my impression that we still do pretty well at educating across the broad range, from those on work study to National Merit finalists. But it costs money. Nolan expected his boards to hire good teachers and stay out of their way, to be very, very careful about that crucial vote to give tenure, and to pass the budget.*

*Nolan had no staff, merely a single overworked secretary, and he liked to inveigle board people into becoming his unofficial assistants. Here’s an example of how this worked. It struck him that it would be*

*nice if the high school had some outdoor sculpture. Before I knew how it had happened, I found myself in charge of locating a suitable piece and moving it through the budget. People in Salisbury had just formed the neanderthal Taxpayers' Association, and I knew they wouldn't be at all enthusiastic about this idea. Nolan assured me that I would be able to take care of it. We had a fine year talking to sculptors and looking at slides, and with the help of Elodie Osborne and Alexander Calder, we found the bronze lady who is still undressing under the white oak. We made this part of a more elaborate program. A Vo Ag class landscaped the courtyard, building paths and a stone wall, the art department arranged for a year's travelling painting exhibition, Industrial Arts built movable display panels, and none of this cost any money except for the piece of sculpture. A bargain! I wish we could have thought of a similar scheme for the tennis courts, which have been put in the first draft of the budget for twenty-five years, and are still being cut out at the final reading.."*

\*\*\*\*\*

At the end of the school year in 1968 Edward C. Dorsett, vice-principal and dean of boys for twenty-three years, was granted a leave of absence to retire in June of 1969. Retiring at the same time were two of the original staff, Ambler R. Travis and Mae E. Gesell. These three people contributed to the quality of education at the high school for thirty years.

This was the period when drug use by students surfaced. Unlike most secondary schools of the period, the staff at Housatonic acknowledged that drugs were around and students were experimenting with them. Under the leadership of the new assistant principal, Richard A. Alto, a series of drug abuse seminars was conducted through the Adult Education Program. The seminars were well attended by parents and students as well as interested citizens from the communities. Student programs on drug abuse were developed to help better inform and protect the young people.

There were many changes in the 1968-1969 school year. The biggest was the much publicized move to a modular type of schedule. A module is a short period of time that may be used to build class periods of varying time lengths. Under the modular system it is possible to use a combination of large and small group instruction for the same course on different days. But change is not always easy or comfortable as the opening of school in September would show. Students arrived to find incomplete schedules or schedules with classes in conflict. Alas, the age of the computer had not yet caught up to new educational concepts so the administrators and staff began the laborious task of hand scheduling. Finally every student was scheduled and classes proceeded.

Part of the concept of the modular design required students to use unassigned time as learning time. This approach took the students out

of the large study hall sessions, providing instead supervised, small group learning centers. The new media center, next to the library, contained film strips, tapes, and microfilm readers. There was a math-science resource center and an English-language-social studies center as well as the library. During the activity period all teachers not involved in an activity conducted special help sessions for their students. The concept was wonderful — the implementation often difficult. In the two years to follow the administration and staff developed modifications that made the system much more effective.

At the Thirtieth Annual Commencement one hundred sixty-six seniors received diplomas in a ceremony highlighted by Housatonic's 3,000th graduate, Barry J. Hunter of North Canaan. The year had been an exciting one educationally.

In the fall of 1969 vandals attempted to blow up the front of the school with dynamite. While they did inflict damage to the four pillar casings at the entrance and to the offices, the grand building that was the pride of so many stood firm. Ernest O. Sibley would have been proud. The incident did attract network television notice, but it also helped to develop a cohesive effort on the part of faculty and students to combat the divisive forces of that period.

\*\*\*\*\*

John L. Mahoney, Principal

*The Kirby Years at Housatonic, 1966 to 1979, were a ride on a roller coaster. On the one hand there were, as in the country at large, some student protests, even an application of dynamite to the front entry area one night in September of 1969. On the other hand there was a burst of creativity, a questioning of what had been accepted for years, that made for substantial growth. The daily schedule was built in "mods," or modules, at one point, and Ranch Style Noodles disappeared from the cafeteria menu. Drugs and anti-drug programs made their appearance on campus, but so did some marvelous musical productions, some famous poets, and Shakespeare and Company. In the spring of 1971, Falls Village's Steve Blass, HVRHS Class of 1960 and a star pitcher for some of Ed Kirby's great baseball teams, worked out with the varsity squad during a brief strike of major league ballplayers. Housatonic won the Northwest Conference title that year, and Steve Blass went on to pitch the Pittsburgh Pirates to a World Series championship over the Baltimore Orioles. Which gave Bob Steele the opportunity to speak at the ceremonies at Steve Blass Day in North Canaan later that fall. Kirby continued the tradition of the principal as teacher, but he introduced Geology, and Psychology became just part of Contemporary Problems. In noisy years, budgets were challenged by a militant Faculty Association as being too low. In quiet years, the only ones to show up at the Annual Budget Meeting were the officials involved. Under the increasing influ-*

ence of the 1969 movie "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," Principal Kirby's attention turned to the West. Slide shows began to appear in American history classes; articles by him surfaced in magazines; eventually there was a book on the Sundance Kid: he even brought the younger sister of Butch Cassidy to the school one day to address American history classes. The transition from Paul Wakelee Stoddard to Edward Maurice Kirby was complete. While his times permitted Dr. Stoddard to direct things — everything — from on high, Mr. Kirby's very different times required that he be a grassroots participant even while accepting responsibility for the direction of the Housatonic ship. Pearl Harbor and V-J Day were very different from Earth Day and Woodstock, but Housatonic continued to prosper. Respondents to a survey of community attitudes toward the high school in 1972, right in the middle of the Kirby Years, rated the academic, athletic, and extra-curricular programs good, and the Vo-Ag Program excellent.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Class of 1970 became the first to have their commencement exercises on the front lawn of the school. The outdoor ceremony had been approved, at the request of the seniors, by the principal in the previous year but rain had driven the program indoors. Since the auditorium sat only 626, the outdoor setting proved to be advantageous when over 700 guests attended in addition to the graduating class. Dorothy Van Doren received the annual Community Award of Merit for her contribution to the world community as an author and editor, and to the local community in the field of education.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dorothy Van Doren, former Regional Board member, Cornwall

*"I was glad to get your letter about our first 50 years and have plans to think up some bright ideas about it. You may not realize that Regional is more to us than just a half-century. In '39 and '40 Mark had a sabbatical leave from Columbia and we decided with war clouds over our heads to spend it in Cornwall. Charlie had just finished 8th grade in the City and Country School in N.Y. So since the school bus passed our road, off went Charlie as a first Freshman in the newly opened school.*

*I'll send more later. Fond greeting to you both and love to that old HVRHS."*

\*\*\*\*\*

That year three teachers, representing a total of seventy-six years of service to the school, retired at the end of the school year. John Just, a teacher of mathematics, served as the department head in that area

for many years. From 1948 to 1954 he was also the junior varsity coach of baseball. William J. Meder for years was the music department. Mr. Meder conducted as many as seven performing groups in addition to providing music lessons for individual students and small groups. His accomplishments are even more impressive when one remembers the days before the auditorium and music room. In those days he held lessons in various rooms and closets and large group practices in the old (acoustically disastrous) cafeteria. Clarke B. Wood, a member of the original faculty, developed the vocational agriculture program to one of national prominence. On June 7, 1970, in a community ceremony, the new vo-ag building was dedicated and named the 'Clarke B. Wood Vocational Agriculture Center,' in honor of Mr. Wood's thirty-one years of service to the local, state and national agricultural communities.

**DR. ROBERT L. FISHER 'RETIRES'  
FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD**

At the end of his term in 1971, Dr. Fisher announced that he would not pursue the post of Regional Board representative from Sharon again. He had come to the board in 1957 and was elected chairman in 1959. In all Dr. Fisher served for part of three decades. Since the original board in 1939 no individual had given more of time and expertise to the education of the region's high school students. His thoughts, creative ideas and articulate statements at meetings, hearings and to the press make fascinating reading. One must remember that all members of our seven boards of education serve totally as volunteers. Dr. Fisher performed his duties as if they were part of his livelihood. His comments, statements and presentations were always on target, always informative, sometimes controversial and, on occasion, caustic.

M. Adela Eads of Kent was elected Regional School Board Chairman upon Dr. Fisher's retirement.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ed Kirby

*Dealing with the good doctor as board chairman was an interesting experience indeed. He cared so much about the school and particularly what it could offer the students. While he might argue in work sessions over my budget proposals, innovations and ideas, once we had settled he was the best support a person could have.*

*When his medical schedule at the Sharon Hospital was tight, Dr. Fisher would appear at the board meeting in his surgical greens. It was not long before he became known as the 'Jolly Green Giant'.*

*Dr. Fisher was an intense negotiator. I recall those days when I met with him to discuss my salary for the coming year; either in the maternity*

*recovery room at the hospital or in his office, in line with the expectant mothers. From his office, Dr. Fisher always escorted me out after our talks stating, "Take care of yourself. Call me if you have any problems." What strange looks I received from the ladies in waiting!*

*Dr. Fisher was the epitome of a Regional Board Chairman, perhaps only comparable to Samuel A. Eddy of the earlier years. Despite a busy medical schedule, he dedicated an extraordinary amount of energy to improve the quality of education for our young people.*

\*\*\*\*\*

In 1971 under the direction of music teacher Gary Palmieri, two quality musical productions were presented. These would be the first of a series of vocal productions by the music department over the next few years. Music productions and the senior play drew full houses for every performance. Also in 1971 the baseball team, coached by John Mahoney, won the Northwest Conference Championship. The same year several students received statewide recognition for both academic and athletic achievements. Lucinda Monell of Sharon was cited as one of the outstanding students in English by the National Council of Teachers of English. The school and community were saddened during the year by the death of Ruth J. Eaton, a teacher of art since 1951.

In October of 1971 the school joined the regional community in celebrating 'Steve Blass Day'. Blass (Class of 1960), of the Pittsburgh Pirates, had been the hero of the World Series with Baltimore a few weeks earlier. All schools were dismissed at noon and five thousand people jammed North Canaan's Railroad Plaza for the ceremonies. Principal Edward M. Kirby acted as master of ceremonies. Included among the speakers was Bob Steele of Hartford radio station WTIC, U.S. Senator Lowell M. Weicker and Congresswoman Ella T. Grasso.

Curriculum development had become a very important focal point in the early '70's. Teachers re-evaluated what they were teaching and the methods they used in an effort to make course offerings more meaningful. Housatonic, like most other public schools, had been witness to the decrease in the total number of students pursuing further education beyond the secondary level. New goals needed to include development of economic understanding, cultural understanding, environmental studies, the humanities and the clarification of basic values such as honesty, integrity and the dignity of man. In keeping with the move toward career education, Career Awareness Day was a special event enthusiastically received. Resource people from within the Regional community came to the school to review with students the expertise required for a career in medicine, carpentry, education, real estate, electricity and electronics and a myriad of other professions or vocations.

In June of 1972 Cora Kingsbury Scranton, teacher of home economics and the last member of the original Housatonic Regional faculty, retired

from teaching. Mrs. Scranton took some years off to raise a family but even then continued to take an active part in school functions. Her time in teaching and service to the school covered thirty-three years.

The energy crisis demanded a concerted effort from the whole school population to reduce drastically the use of fuel oil and electricity.

The tragic death of Andrew A. Casale, Chairman of the Social Studies department, occurred at the close of the 1974 school year. "Mr. C.", as he was fondly known, had enriched the lives of many during his fourteen years at the school. Frank N. Ruotolo was named to succeed Mr. Casale as department head and director of the Adult Education Program.

### LONG TERM CUSTODIANS RETIRE

Chief Custodian John B. DuBois retired from his post in September of 1974 after thirty-five years of service to the school. As Mr. DuBois stepped out the front door on his last day he was greeted by 770 cheering students, faculty and other staff members. He was presented with a certificate of appreciation for his long and excellent service. Mr. DuBois was again honored in June at the final assembly where he received the Principal's Award. And the following year Walter A. Doty retired as custodian and driver after thirty-four years of service. He received the Award of Dedicated Service. The "John and Walt" era was over.

Life in the school community is but a microcosm of society. During the difficult years in the seventies the school was beset by personnel problems, budget problems, extensive budget negotiations, arbitration, and staff cutbacks, even in face of projected increasing enrollment. Unfortunately the board and faculty were sometimes pitted against each other on key issues with the administration, more often than not, in the middle. Student unrest was rampant around the country and Housatonic was not without problems in that area. A number of 'sit-ins' and 'sit-outs' occurred, most in relation to the controversial Vietnam War. It often became difficult to focus on the primary reason for being — the education of the high school students. The challenges were great and the challenges were met as the school emerged from this period in history, perhaps even stronger than before.

While the conflicts took various forms in the mid-seventies, many positive educational experiences took place. Unlike the many private preparatory schools in the area, with which it was often compared, Housatonic Regional operated as a comprehensive high school. As a public institution the school was open to all students and was obliged to provide programs to meet the educational needs of every young person. (That is still the charge of public education today.) In this era a new emphasis was placed on the core curriculum and greater effort directed toward an exposure to the practical and fine arts.

In the fall of 1975 Michael Guy was appointed head coach of football. Under his tutelage a very strong team was developed that year and again in 1976 and 1979.

'The Spirit of 76' was the chosen theme of the senior class in that bicentennial year and efforts to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative began to be a distinct trend. Sophomore Nancy Van Doren represented Connecticut in Washington, D.C., as the recipient of the Hugh O'Brian Award. Special studies were conducted in the curriculum in both work-study and sex-family life education. Eighteen-year-old students became part of Project Vote '76 and interscholastic sports, especially girls' athletics, showed improvement. During senior week students and faculty celebrated the nation's bicentennial by dressing in clothing representing various stages in history.

Through the efforts of Donald G. Kobler, Chairman of the English and Language Department, the Visiting Artists Program prospered. This program had served as the impetus for cultural development at the high school for some time. The program, developed originally to support and enrich the English curriculum, was partially funded by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. Through a humanities approach a wide variety of artists made presentations and worked directly with students in a classroom setting. This unique program continues today under the direction of William DeVoti.

In June, Donald G. Kobler received the Principal's Award in recognition of his retirement and for distinguished service to the school. Also retiring in 1976 were Arthur W. Miller after twenty-eight years at Housatonic and Robert A. England after twenty-six. At commencement 160 seniors were honored as the 'Spirit of 76', and Ralph I. Scoville became the 4000th graduate of the school.

In 1976-1977 the high school underwent the ten-year evaluation study by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The major focus in the following year was the implementation of the recommendations made by the visiting committee. The item most essential was the need for a complete systematic written approach to curriculum objectives, guidelines and evaluation. The recommendation included greater coordination of programs within the school and with the six elementary schools in Region 1 and a review of programs for the non-college bound student.

Throughout the 1977-1978 school year the faculty and administration worked to accomplish the goals set by the visiting committee. The enrollment had increased considerably and additional help was needed to meet the changing times. The Regional School Board accepted the administration's recommendation to change a portion of a teacher's schedule for the purpose of assisting with supervision and curriculum.



John L. Mahoney was selected to serve as director of English, Languages and Social Studies. The principal and vice principal divided the responsibilities for the other disciplines.

### **HOUSATONIC REACHES HIGHEST ENROLLMENT**

In 1977-1978 the Housatonic Valley Regional High School reached its highest enrollment. The official average for state reports was 761 students, but during the year with students moving in and out, the number was often over the 770 mark. While the last addition was designed to accommodate 850 students, changes in educational concepts and room utility had severely limited available space. With the period of declining birth rate then being felt in the six elementary schools, it was evident that the high school enrollment would be steadily declining for the next several years.

Curriculum work continued that year with a new direction. Community meetings were held with the purpose of encouraging citizens of the region to review the educational program. Commentary from students was also reviewed. Most of the discussions centered about the role of the school in terms of the college bound student, the student who terminates education at the end of high school (does anyone ever 'terminate' his education?) and the student who does not finish high school. Lively large and small group discussions took place with a myriad of topics reviewed. For the faculty and Regional School Board this was a time for listening and assessing. The project proved to be most valuable and did much to develop understanding between the community and the school staff.

Two major building improvements were completed in 1979. Greenhouse facilities were added to the Clarke B. Wood Agricultural Center at a cost of \$34,000, completely reimbursed by the state. The home economics area was completed renovated. The total cost of \$91,974 was offset by a state grant of \$49,000.

### **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

When the high school opened it was referred to as The Regional or Regional or H.V.R.H.S. When additional regional schools appeared on the scene we became known as Housatonic Regional and Housatonic. In later years that was shortened to Housy, a name the newspaper sports pages found more convenient for their headlines. Of course, name confusion is not new to the northwest corner. Falls Village is really Canaan and Canaan is actually North Canaan (this one thoroughly confused the

State Department of Education for years). And Lakeville is in the town of Salisbury but there is a Lakeville post office and a Salisbury post office; then they have one in Taconic (in the town of Salisbury) too. There's Cornwall Bridge, West Cornwall, North Cornwall, Cornwall Center, Cornwall Hollow, and Cornwall Plains, all Cornwall but with three separate post offices. Kent has two post offices but one town. Sharon boasts Sharon Valley, Sharon Mountain, Ellsworth, East Street, and, like the other towns, many other areas. Though Sharon has one post office, residents on the east side of town receive their mail through post offices in Cornwall Bridge or West Cornwall. No wonder so many people are confused.

The 'Mountaineers' became the mascot for the athletic teams in the 1940's. There were other names in the early days but Mountaineers (named for the massive Barrack Mountain across from the school) has lasted, except for one brief period in the 1960's. At that time, due to the hawks constantly soaring over the school, the teams were the Housatonic Hawks. But that mascot was short lived; changed back, perhaps, when it was learned that the soaring creatures were actually turkey buzzards.

In May of 1979, Principal Edward M. Kirby was selected for the post of assistant superintendent of schools for Regional District One. The Stoddard/Kirby era had covered a span of forty years of Housatonic history. After four years as a student at Housatonic, three years as assistant coach, sixteen years as a teacher of physical science, mathematics, coach in three sports, counselor, and athletic director, he moved to a position where his work would be with students, teachers and boards of education in the total six-town district. At the same time Vice-Principal Richard A. Alto left to take a position as principal at a high school in New Hampshire.

In 1978, under Coach Howard O'Dell, the track team won the conference championship, a feat that was repeated in 1979 again with Mr. O'Dell coaching. This was the period when track became the most successful sport at Housatonic as Coach David Lindsay went on to lead the team to league championships in 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1988.

\*\*\*\*\*

David B. Lindsay, Science Department, Athletics, Yearbook Advisor

*Ed Kirby has been my mentor since he hired me in 1966, when I filled the science position he vacated to become the Principal of Housatonic. When I think HVRHS, I think of him. I have modeled my classroom style after his, I have pushed my students and athletes towards success as he did his, I have been encouraged to take on certain activities by him, and I have tried to squeeze as many of these activities into each day as he has done.*

Many of my peers have gone through a similar relationship with Ed, but I have had more opportunities than most. I've team-taught a geology course with him, "done" fieldwork with him on the road, researched history (including one miserable winter's day in New York City), talked about athletic strategy and player motivation, and discussed teaching and teachers with him at various times and sometimes at exotic locations.

He's a tough act to follow, this Housatonic graduate, local sports team player, teacher of math, physical sciences and social studies at the elementary, secondary and adult level, as well as a school administrator.

Ed was a classroom teacher from 1951 to 1966 after serving in the Army at the end of World War II and getting his teaching certificate from Central Connecticut. Among his many activities during those years were advisor of the Varsity Club, summer baseball leagues coach and scout and a Senior Homeroom Teacher - the 1956 yearbook, "The White Oak" was dedicated to him. He developed curriculum and field trips, and was selected to the Harvard Science Project and Vassar Earth Science Institute. He established "Project Housatonic", a cultural, literary and geological look at the Northern Housatonic Valley which became a part of the Region #1 Summer School and the HVRHS curriculum.

As high school Athletic Director, he saw sports expand and the school enter a new league. He was an assistant coach in football, basketball, and baseball, but it was as Varsity Baseball coach that he excelled, compiling a 153-38 record while leading Housatonic to league titles in 6 of 8 seasons. Often these teams were in the thick of State Tournament finals. He developed five players who went to the pros, three to the major leagues. Coaching is teaching. He wrote the HVRHS Baseball Handbook, the Housatonic Football History, served on many CIAC committees, and was inducted into the Connecticut Coaches Hall of Fame in 1983.

As Principal from 1966 to 1979, he modernized budgets, formalized teacher evaluations, involved the community in high school activities and introduced innovative (and often controversial) concepts in student scheduling and curriculum. He advised the National Honor Society and never stopped teaching, creating a senior geology course, a unit on "The Last West" for the junior history course, led adult field trips and lectured on science and history around the state. As an author, he wrote geologic pamphlets, history books, and even now is writing a western novel.

As District Assistant Superintendent from 1979-1985, Ed Kirby was the teacher contract negotiator for the Board of Education, sat in the local elementary schools when substitute administrative personnel were needed, and promoted unity among the seven schools of Region One. Still involved in many community organizations such as the Sharon Wetlands Commission, he continued to do what he does best - teach. The "Hunter Model" of staff development became his major project,

and he was back in the classroom again; helping new teachers to adjust to a career, and helping veteran teachers to refine their skills.

Still active after retirement, he takes time from his educational consulting programs and supports Housatonic athletes and activities and is on call to teach history and science and classroom management. His varied interests have led him to the Presidency of NOLA and of WGBWS, respected national and local organizations.

The longer I teach and coach, the more I respect longevity in this business, and the more I understand how tremendous are Ed Kirby's accomplishments. Longevity itself is outstanding in those areas, but to produce winning individuals and teams, and to shape such a unique institution as is Housatonic as well, is remarkable . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

### THIRD PRINCIPAL SELECTED

The Regional Board chose Dr. Robert E. Blesh as the third principal of Housatonic. Thomas P. Higgins, Jr., of Brookfield was appointed assistant principal. Dr. Blesh, who earned his PhD. at the University of Connecticut, came to Housatonic from Wheeler Junior-Senior High School in North Stonington. Previously he had taught at Hamden High School.

The concentration in the next two years was on energy conservation, new courses in several areas, additional community and student study committees and the H.V.R.H.S. Alternative School. The alternative school concept, proposed to the Regional School Board by William DeVoti of the English Department, was designed for those students who had considerable difficulty in coping with the regular program of studies and school life in general. The off-campus facility, based at the Trinity Parish Camp in West Cornwall, began operation in the fall of 1982. The concept, providing unique experiences for the students, is still working effectively at this time.

Upon the resignation of Thomas P. Higgins in October of 1981, David T. Bayersdorfer, a teacher of social studies, served as interim assistant principal. In February Carl Scheinman was appointed assistant principal. That same year the school nurse, Maura Hogan, a lady with an unforgettable Irish brogue, retired after twenty years of dedicated service.

By the spring of 1983 the high school enrollment had declined by a total of 231 students in the four years since the highest peak. Projections from the elementary schools indicated that the decline would continue before leveling off.

In 1983 Dr. Robert E. Blesh resigned as principal. The Regional Schools Services Center administration and the Regional School Board began the search for Housatonic's fourth principal.

## JOHN L. MAHONEY NAMED HOUSATONIC PRINCIPAL

John L. Mahoney, a member of the English and social studies departments since 1964, was the selection of the Regional Board as the fourth principal of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School. In his tenure at Housatonic, Mr. Mahoney had served in a number of positions including assistant and head coach of baseball and assistant football coach. For the first half of the school year, Mr. Bayersdorfer again served as interim assistant principal. In January new assistant principal Barry J. Gajdosik joined the staff.

Mr. Mahoney's first year, 1983-1984, proved to be one of significant growth and change. Entering students found a new system of accountability, one where students had greater freedom as long as they used it in a responsible way. Some students lost that freedom but many maintained it throughout the year.

Two new positions were created in that year. Because of the increasing complexities of maintaining the large building and the need to further improve the existing facilities, the position of plant manager was approved. Named to that role was Dale Brown. The second position, Special Assignment Teacher, was the outgrowth of a district-wide program dealing with refinement of instructional skills for teachers (RIST). The program implementation had been started by Assistant Superintendent Edward Kirby and Director of Instruction Carole Helstrom in the fall of 1979. The use of the so-called Hunter Model in Regional District 1 was the first in New England. To support the program in the high school Robert A. Gutzman, teacher of social studies, was selected as Special Assignment Teacher. In this role Mr. Gutzman had a reduced teaching load in order to help colleagues sharpen their instructional skills.

In June 1984 Everett O. Britton, an administrator and teacher for twenty years at the school, retired. At the same time Mr. Gutzman was named acting director of instruction to replace Mrs. Helstrom, who was granted a leave of absence.

The following year was one with many honors. Housatonic was named one of the four outstanding high schools in the state as part of the national Secondary School Recognition Program. On the national level the school fared well but did not make the final stage. The Girls' Track team, coached by Marge Stevenson, won both the league and State Class Championship. The state championship was the first for a Housatonic athletic team. David B. Lindsay of the science department was named Teacher of The Year and represented the district in state level competition. Richard L. Greco, teacher of science, was named Coach of the Year in girls' soccer.

From the Regional Services Center Mr. Kirby and Mr. Gutzman developed the Teacher Coach Program that would become the first of its kind in Connecticut and one of few nationally. After a rigorous training

program and a competitive exam, four high school teachers were identified as instructional leaders to work with teachers and aides to refine instructional skills. The program would be implemented in the fall of 1985 under the direction of Mr. Gutzman.

At the end of the year, Joanne Fontanella, an outstanding teacher of mathematics for many years, retired.

The decline in student enrollment appeared to level off during this period with 497 in 1984-1985 and 497 in 1985-1986. Some staff cuts were made as the population decreased and teacher loads were readjusted. Enrollment projections indicated that it would be several years before the number of high school students would slowly rise again.

In the summer of 1985 Eugene L. Brooks, a retired administrator from the Webutuck School District, joined the staff as acting assistant principal. During the year he was appointed to the position on a permanent basis. Mr. Brooks brought many years of administrative experience and of working with young people to his position.

In October, 1985, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Edward M. Kirby retired from public education after thirty-five years.

In 1986-1987, after a year of preparation under the leadership of Edward S. Tyburski, Director of Athletics, the ten-year evaluation of Housatonic took place. The visiting team of educators, under the auspices of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, reviewed all facets of the school and voted again to give accreditation.

The Teacher Coach Program has been very successful since its inception. The program became a model for other school systems and many visitors came to the district to observe the program in action, both in the high school and the elementary schools.

The American Field Service program continues to flourish. Beginning in 1950 the local chapter has been in continuous operation at the Housatonic Valley Regional High School. Since that time this cultural exchange has sponsored a total of sixty-six students from thirty-three countries as year-long visitors to Housatonic. In return, seventy-three students from the high school have traveled to foreign countries to learn about other cultures in summer or full-year programs. For many years Mrs. Katherine E. Gannett, formerly of the high school guidance staff, has been coordinator of the program. Several faculty members and a number of parents also have been valued members of the A.F.S. local chapter.

Since the beginning of the school the Vocational Agriculture program and the Future Farmers of America have been very well acknowledged. First under the leadership of Clarke B. Wood and later under George H. Wheeler and Robert A. Gambino, vocational agriculture students and faculty have received local, state and national recognition for their achievements. In 1984 Wilson Korth was named first in the country in dairy production. Two years later George Wheeler was chosen to receive

the honorary American Farmer degree at the FFA convention in Kansas City. In 1987 Vo-Ag teacher Walter C. Burcroff retired after thirty-two years in the department.

Under Principal John L. Mahoney, the 'Friends of Housatonic' was formed. This group, continuing the school's quest for community involvement, is composed of parents and other interested citizens. Their efforts have proved most helpful in a number of areas from curricula to school dances. Mr. Mahoney's administration has worked closely with the faculty in greatly reducing the student dropout rate to one of the lowest in the state. In addition several projects were developed to keep the school in compliance with the ever increasing demands of state building, asbestos and fire codes.

**HENRY W. BURGESS - REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN  
1978-1988**

In September of 1988 Henry W. Burgess passed away. Mr. Burgess had succeeded M. Adela Eads of Kent as chairman of the Regional School Board in 1978. On June 15, 1989, the high school auditorium was named the Henry W. Burgess Auditorium in his honor. In his years of service to the school Mr. Burgess worked toward a stronger relationship with the community, a more satisfactory vote for budget decisions, building improvements and a number of program changes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Henry W. Burgess - former Chairman of the Regional Board, Salisbury

*"My ten years of service as Chairman of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School has, in itself, been an education. The high spot of my tenure was the selection of the high school by the Connecticut State Board of Education as one of four outstanding public high schools in Connecticut to compete for national recognition. That remarkable achievement has made it all worthwhile. But best of all has been the opportunity for me to get to know all the many extraordinarily talented and dedicated people involved in one way or another with this fine institution, who have helped make it what it is.*

\*\*\*\*\*

There are many areas in this history that merit much more than casual mention, but space causes limitations. A significant part of the Housatonic story includes the many awards to the school's publications, 'The Northwest Corner' and the 'Acorn' . . . the Apparatus Club (gymnastics) presentations . . . Career Day . . . Future Homemakers . . . the senior exam . . . the many senior plays and dramatic club performances . . . the Chorus Invitational tour to Vienna, Prague and

Budapest . . . the exemplary efforts of the student council . . . the French club . . . the many years of faculty and student involvement with the bloodmobile . . . vo-ag and practical arts and fine arts open house . . . spaghetti dinners . . . the many student activities . . . Clarke Wood as activities director in the 1950's . . . "Housatonic — No Excuses" . . . Future Business Leaders . . . the senior home room teachers . . . the 'forty-nine 'White Oak' yearbooks to date . . . (Donald G. Kobler was advisor for seventeen and David B. Lindsay also for seventeen) . . . and last, but far from least, the splendid accomplishments of hundreds of students . . . Did you know that the father of President George Bush, Senator Prescott Bush, was the 1955 commencement speaker?

And of course there were the trains! In the early days it was the New York, New Haven and Hartford's Berkshire Line, steaming north and south in front of the school. The students of those days in the 1940's remember the schedule. At the opening of school, 9:07 a.m., the southbound passenger slipped down the grade toward New York and about lunch time a northbound train was working its way up the valley to Pittsfield. As the students left the building at 3:07 p.m., the second southbound passenger train of the day was headed toward the city. The athletes of the day would be witness to the 6:32 struggling up-grade to the north once again. It was not unusual during the World War II years for four or more gargantuan freight trains to roar by with two steam engines, and more than a hundred cars. But as time went on the railroad activity in front of the school declined, just freight and then no trains at all.

While athletics have received a good bit of print in this document, it is important to observe that sports have been the major extracurricular activity for the student body. Under the dedicated leadership of Director of Athletics Edward S. Tyburski, participation in sports has increased to over 50% of the student body, a top record in the state. He has been Housatonic's DA for twenty-three years.

At commencement in June of 1988, E. Louise Frink was honored on her retirement from the school as cafeteria manager and member of the maintenance staff. Her contributions and service spanned a total of forty-three years, longest ever for an employee at Housatonic. Miss Frink is a graduate of the Class of 1945 and a member of the National Honor Society.

### THE FIFTIETH SCHOOL YEAR AT HOUSATONIC

In September of 1988, the fiftieth year of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School began. The anniversary committee, headed by Judith Thormann Moore, began meeting the previous September and soon plans began taking shape for the golden anniversary celebration.



Spirited friends of Housatonic, representatives of each decade of the school's existence, present and former staff, students and board members took an active part in the arrangements.

Symbolically, the fiftieth year was a banner year for the school. As Principal John Mahoney emphasized in his annual report, it was the year of the student. Involvement in all aspects of school life reached a new high, with both state and national recognition. The percentage of graduates going on to higher education, which had reached 70% in 1988, increased to 75% in 1989 while the drop-out rate declined to a new low of 7%. The class of 1989 established an enviable record on the national Advanced Placement Tests when 20 of 24 students qualified for advanced placement and college credit. Club ice hockey and tennis appeared on the interscholastic scene and varsity athletics compiled a record of 138 wins, 86 losses and six ties for the best percentage ever. The girls' track team, defending state champions, won the league title and boys' basketball, continuing its strong resurgence under Coach Dave Bayersdorfer, finished in a first place tie. Coach Guy's football team completed their second outstanding season in a row topped off with a Berkshire Bowl win on Thanksgiving Day. The baseball team won more games than any in Housatonic history (18) behind the coaching of Michael DeMazza. Cross-Country star junior Kim Borst of North Canaan placed high on the state level and qualified for the New England meet. From there Kim went on to run in a national invitational meet in Reno, Nevada.

To a great degree the recent successes at Housatonic must be credited to the efforts of Principal John L. Mahoney. He has worked both effectively and diligently to enrich the academic program while still giving focus to vocational areas, student activities and the overall operation of the school. And it is with an enthusiastic flair that Mr. Mahoney aggressively promotes Housatonic, on the local, state and national level.

When 110 seniors graduated on June 16, they were joined by eighteen members of the Class of 1940, the first graduating class, who received special diplomas. The commencement of 1989 brought the total to 5,870 graduates in the first fifty years.

## EPILOGUE

What of the fifty years to come? What will they be like?

As in the past, with the enthusiastic support of parents and the community, the good times, with their educational successes, will far exceed the difficult moments. This unique institution, formed by the pioneers of the northwest corner so long ago, will continue to be number one . . . Regional High School Number 1.

Climb some clear morning to the top of Barrack Mountain in front of the school and gaze at the panorama that is the Housatonic Valley Regional High School. If you listen carefully in the morning breeze the strains of the familiar song drift softly down the valley.

“High above the Housatonic  
mid the Berkshires proud and true,  
Our high school floats its colors  
the gold and royal blue . . .

## APPENDIX I

### REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMEN

Samuel A. Eddy, North Canaan	1939-1945
Howell N. White, Salisbury	1945-1946
Thomas W. Luce, Sharon	1946-1947
G. Edward Byers, North Canaan	1947-1955
C. Whittlesey Hart, Cornwall	1955-1958
Robert L. Fisher, Sharon	1958-1971
M. Adela Eads, Kent	1971-1978
Henry W. Burgess, Salisbury	1978-1988
Linda M. Marks, North Canaan	1988-Present

### HOUSATONIC VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Paul W. Stoddard	1939-1966
Edward M. Kirby	1966-1979
Robert E. Blesh	1979-1983
John L. Mahoney	1983-Present

### DEAN OF BOYS/VICE PRINCIPALS/ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

M. Edward Dakin	1940-1945
(On leave to armed forces - 1943-1945)	
Edward C. Dorsett	1946-1968
Warren C. Clark	1951-1966
(V.P. in charge of Adult Education Program)	
Richard A. Alto	1968-1979
Thomas P. Higgins	1979-1981
Carl H. Scheinman	1981-1983
Barry L. Gajdosik	1983-1985
Eugene L. Brooks	1985-Present

### DEAN OF GIRLS/DIRECTOR OF GUIDANCE

Adelaide Gordon Fitts	1940-1946
Mary Meehan Holian	1946-1951
Caroline Caruso Wakefield	1951-1973

CENTRAL OFFICE  
CONNECTICUT BUREAU OF RURAL SERVICES - 1937-1970  
REGIONAL SCHOOLS SERVICES CENTER - 1970-PRESENT

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

William M. Teague	1939-1942
Ernest O. Nybakken	1942-1948
Wilmer L. Shultz	1949-1955
Ina C. Sartorius	1955-1958
William J. Nolan	1959-1968
Anthony Tedeschi	1969-1970
Frank Samuelson	1970-1975
James Erviti	1975-1980
Joseph P. Robitaille	1980-1985
Val Bernardoni	1985-Present

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Frank Samuelson	1969-1970
Joseph Sullivan	1972-1979
Edward M. Kirby	1979-1985
June Hartford-Alley	1986-1989

**SUPERVISOR/DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION**

Ina C. Sartorius	1951-1955
Mary Jane Reid	1956-1961
Amanda H. Berry	1961-1971
Mary V. Brewer	1971-1979
Carole H. Helstrom	1979-1984
Robert A. Gutzman	1984-Present

**SPECIAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR/DIRECTOR OF PUPIL SERVICES**

Katherine G. McCann	1970-1979
Faye Y. Parmelee	1979-1984
Angela Wormser-Reid	1984-1986
Julia C. Segalla	1986-Present

## APPENDIX II

### COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

- June 21, 1940  
Rev. Robert Elliott Speer, DD, LL.D  
Formerly Secretary of the Presbyterian  
Board of Foreign Missions
- June 13, 1941  
William Allan Neilson, Ph.D., LL.D  
President-Emeritus of Smith College
- June 12, 1942  
James Lukens McConaghy, Ph.D.,  
LL.D., L.H.D.  
President of Wesleyan University
- June 18, 1943  
The Honorable Raymond E. Baldwin, LL.D  
Governor of Connecticut
- June 16, 1944  
Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, D.D., LL.D  
President of Union Theological Seminary
- June 15, 1945  
Col. Arnold Whitridge, USA, Retired  
Formerly Master of Calhoun College,  
Yale University
- June 15, 1946  
The Honorable Thomas C. Hart, U.S.N.,  
Retired  
United States Senator from Connecticut
- June 13, 1947  
The Honorable Chester A. Bowles  
Formerly Director of the  
Office of Price Management
- June 18, 1948  
Mark Van Doren, Ph.D., Litt.D.  
Professor of English, Columbia University
- June 17, 1949  
Lewis Gannett, M.A.  
Author and Columnist,  
New York Herald-Tribune
- June 16, 1950  
The Honorable Brien McMahon  
Senior United States Senator  
from Connecticut
- June 15, 1951  
Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, D.D., Th.D.,  
ST.D., Litt.D.  
President Emeritus, Union Theological  
Seminary
- June 10, 1952  
The Honorable John Davis Lodge  
Governor of Connecticut
- June 19, 1952  
Miss Helen Kenyon  
Formerly Moderator, The Congregational  
Christian Churches
- June 18, 1954  
Rev. Karl Reilan, D.D., LL.D.  
Rector-Emeritus, St. George's Church,  
New York
- June 17, 1955  
The Honorable Prescott Bush  
United States Senator from Connecticut
- June 22, 1956  
Walter Prichard Eaton  
Essayist and Dramatic Critic
- June 21, 1957  
Arnold Whitridge, Ph.D.  
Formerly Master of Calhoun College,  
Yale University
- June 10, 1958  
Sidney Lovett, D.D.  
Chaplain of Yale University
- June 19, 1959  
William John Sanders, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education of Conn

June 24, 1960 Sarah Gibson Blanding, LL.D., L.H.D. President of Vassar College	June 15, 1973 Abraham A. Ribicoff, LL.B. United States Senator from Connecticut
June 23, 1961 Daniel Alfred Poling, D.D., Litt.D., L.H.D., LL.D.	June 20, 1974 Elbert Gross, Ph.D. Professor of Political Science Western Connecticut State College
June 15, 1962 Walter Howe, Ph.D. Retiring United States Ambassador to Chile	June 20, 1975 Gloria Schaffer Secretary of the State of Connecticut
June 21, 1963 Homer D. Babbidge, Jr., Ph.D. President of University of Connecticut	June 17, 1976 Harold W. Felton, LL.B. Author
June 19, 1964 The Honorable Abraham A. Ribicoff, LL.D. United States Senator from Connecticut (Sen. Ribicoff's speech was delivered by Governor Ella T. Grasso)	June 24, 1977 Walter A. Fairservis, Ph.D. Professor of Archeology and Anthropology, Vassar College
June 18, 1965 Tehyi Hsieh, L.H.D., LL.D. Chinese Philosopher and Author	June 23, 1978 Dr. Robert L. Fisher, M.D. Former Chairman of the Regional School Board
June 17, 1966 William Sloane Coffin, D.D. Chaplain of Yale University	June 15, 1979 Robert Vincent Iosue President, York College of Pennsylvania
June 23, 1967 Wilbert Snow Professor Emeritus of English at Wesleyan University	June 20, 1980 James L. Buckley Former United States Senator, New York
June 14, 1968 Archibald M. Woodruff, Ph.D. Chancellor, University of Hartford	June 19, 1981 Robin L. Moore Author
June 29, 1969 Theodore D. Lockwood, Ph.D. President, Trinity College	June 11, 1982 Richard I. Curtis Author and Teacher Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Class of 1965
June 15, 1970 Dumont F. Kenny, Ph.D. President, York College	June 10, 1983 Robert A. Ward Formerly Professor of English, Amherst College First Selectman, Town of Kent
June 18, 1971 John K.M. McCaffery, M.A. Radio and Television Commentator	

June 23, 1984  
Dr. Mary Alice White  
Professor of Psychology and Education  
Teacher's College, Columbia University

June 14, 1985  
Edward M. Kirby  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Regional District One

June 20, 1986  
Robert Yoakum  
Author and Humorist

June 19, 1987  
Donald Gates  
Principal, Portland High School  
Portland, CT

June 20, 1988  
Edward R. Dorsett  
President, Connecticut Education  
Association  
Housatonic Valley Regional High School  
Class of 1960

June 16, 1989 (Fiftieth Graduating Class)  
Clarke B. Wood  
Former Department Head,  
Vocational Agriculture  
Housatonic Valley Regional High School

### APPENDIX III

#### COMMUNITY AWARD OF MERIT PRESENTATIONS

1953	Emma Bailey Speer	Salisbury
1954	Walter David Lambert	North Canaan
1955	Dines Carlson	Canaan
1956	Dr. Lawrence Kingsley Hall	Kent
1957	Dr. Francis Peyton Rous	Cornwall
1958	Robert M. Chapin, Jr.	Sharon
1959	Hal Borland	Salisbury
1960	Lewis Stiles Gannett	Cornwall
1961	George Laurence Nelson	Kent
1962	Dr. Salo W. Baron	North Canaan
1963	Maude Miner Hadden	Salisbury
1964	Dr. Mark Van Doren	Cornwall
1965	George Henry Soule, Jr.	Cornwall
1966	Elizabeth Ann Hoskins	Salisbury
1967	Admiral Thomas C. Hart	Sharon
1968	Dorothy P. Lathrop	Canaan
	Gertrude K. Lathrop	
1969	Edward Ernst Kleinschmidt	Salisbury
1970	Dorothy Van Doren	Cornwall
1971	Christopher Tunnard	Canaan
1972	Charles Kryle Wilkinson	Sharon
1973	Sarah Gibson Blanding	Salisbury
1974	Peppino Mangravite	Cornwall
1975	Leonard R. Howard	Kent
1976	Fritz Magg	Canaan
1977	Arnold Whitridge	Salisbury
1978	Gerard Piel	Salisbury
1979	Ralph Ingersol	Sharon
1980	Larry Gates	Cornwall
1981	No award given	
1982	Dr. Josephine Evarts	Salisbury
1983	Martha B. Briscoe	Salisbury
1984	Dr. Robert L. Fisher	Sharon
1985	Benjamin Belcher	Salisbury
	Nancy Belcher	
1986	Dr. Carl Bornemann	Canaan
	Barbara F. Bornemann	
1987	Harrison Salisbury	Salisbury
	Charlotte Salisbury	
1988	H. Lincoln Foster	Canaan
	Laura Louise Foster*	
1989	Henry W. Burgess*	Salisbury

\*Awarded posthumously



## SOURCES CONSULTED

Annual Report of the High School Principal, 1940-1989

Connecticut Western News; various issues

Hartford Courant; various issues

Housatonic Valley Regional High School; office files

Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Paul W. Stoddard Library; Historical Scrapbooks, Volumes 1-24

Kirby, Edward and Mary, personal files

Kirby, Edward M., Baseball Handbook

Kirby, Edward M., 46th Annual Commencement Address

Kirby, Edward M., Housatonic Football - A History, 1946-1988

Kirby, Edward M., The Formation of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School District, 1978

Lakeville Journal; various issues

Lindsay, David B., Housatonic Valley Regional High School

Mahoney, John L., Principal, Housatonic Valley Regional High School

McGuire, Bunny, Housatonic Valley Regional High School

Regional Schools Services Center, office files

Scoville Memorial Library, Salisbury, Connecticut

Stoddard, Paul W. & Vosburgh, Emma M., The Housatonic Valley Regional High School, 1964

The Northwest Corner, H.V.R.H.S. newspaper; various issues

The White Oak, H.V.R.H.S. yearbooks

Waterbury Republican; various issues

Woodward, Lucille Mathews, Regional History, 1940