



A History of Looking Ahead:

The Shaker Schools Celebrate 100 Years





The Shaker Schools have come a long way since a handful of students gathered in the office of real estate developers Oris and Mantis Van Sweringen to learn the three R's – reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Today, the world is our campus.

Graduates of the Shaker Schools now total more than 33,000 and occupy every corner of the globe, including some 5,300 alumni who call Shaker Heights home. While the curriculum – and fashions - may have seen some changes over the years, themes of academic excellence, artistic development, and social awareness run through the decades. Here are some of the highlights from 10 decades of our community's commitment to providing a top-notch public education:

The Early Years: “Peaceful Shaker Village” Opens a School

While the world's attention is focused on the ill-fated voyage of the Titanic, the start of World War I, and the Spanish Flu epidemic – which claimed more lives

than the Great War – the Van Sweringens get to work creating their ideal community, “Peaceful Shaker Village,” which they envision as a respite from the troubles of the world.

The first school in Shaker Village opens in the Van Sweringen real estate office at Lee Road and Shaker Boulevard, with four teachers and 26 pupils. That same year, Shaker's Board of Education agrees to a territory swap with the Cleveland schools that provides Shaker Village a portion of jurisdiction near Shaker Square in exchange for an area near Cleveland's Harvey Rice Elementary School on Larchmere Boulevard.

Boulevard School is constructed in 1914 to accommodate the burgeoning growth of Shaker Village, population 250. The school board makes its first significant purchase: a wagon to transport students to school, at a cost of \$185.

Beatrice Wall becomes the first - and only – graduate of the class of 1917. A new high school (the present-day Woodbury School) is constructed soon after-

ward to accommodate the swelling ranks of Shaker students.

During World War I, the teaching of German becomes unpopular and is dropped from the curriculum, to be reinstated years later. Military training is made compulsory for boys in the upper grades.

In 1912, I came to the Shaker Schools from the Minnesota State Normal School at Duluth...and was enthusiastic over this opportunity to develop a school where individual progress would be the first consideration. – May M. Chapman, principal of Shaker's first school, 1912-1916.

The 1920s: The Building Boom

Flappers and rumrunners grab the national headlines but don't make a splash in the first Shaker student newspaper, *The Zip* (no longer in publication). The Shakerite is born soon after (and is still in publication, with a new presence on the web). The first student yearbook, *The Greenback*, is published in 1923. In

1920s: The population boom results in a golden era of school construction in Shaker Village: Sussex, Onaway, Moreland, Ludlow, Fernway, and Lomond are built to accommodate an enrollment of 2,000.



1929, the name is changed to Gristmill, the name still in use except for a brief flirtation in 1930 with Silhouette.

The population boom results in a golden era of school construction in Shaker Village: Sussex, Onaway, Moreland, Ludlow, Fernway, and Lomond elementary schools are built to accommodate an increased enrollment of 2,000 students. In 1921, the first bus is employed for transporting students to school.

The school board lengthens the school day to provide “sufficient study time, in each class period, to complete the assignment for the day, obviating the necessity of home study” and hires the District’s first librarian. The first special education class opens in 1927.

Quarantine for every boy and girl who uses ungrammatical expressions! Poor English is as contagious as smallpox and should be treated accordingly. — Miss Kochiser, Shaker Village teacher, c.1920.

The 1930s: “Sanely progressive but wisely conservative”

Shaker Village becomes incorporated as the City of Shaker Heights. A brand new Shaker Heights High School is constructed in response to a growing population. Soon afterward, the High School is selected as one of 30 high schools in the nation to participate in an eight-year study by the Progressive Education Association, designed to change the focus of the curriculum from rote memorization to more active student engagement.

The school cafeteria serves a hamburger for the first time, “in response to long and vociferous demand,” according to a contemporaneous account.

As the Great Depression shows signs of easing in the late 1930s, programs and services that were suspended are gradually reinstated.

When I first came to Shaker in 1936, I was struck by the beauty of the school buildings and the well-kept grounds. I found in operation a forward-looking program of education

— a program not only sanely progressive in its provisions for meeting individual needs and encouraging individual interest, but also wisely conservative in its emphasis on adequate mastery of such fundamental skills as those used in reading and arithmetic. — Arthur K. Loomis, Superintendent.

The 1940s: Facing Life Squarely

The United States enters World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As FDR draws the nation together with his fire-side chats, Shaker Heights High School establishes its own short-wave radio station.

Student patrols and air raid drills become the norm, and gasoline rationing gives rise to double dating. Shockingly, due to the lack of silk stockings, girls are permitted to wear slacks to school.

A quiet student named Paul Newman graduates. Many students know him as “the guy who was always working on his 1936 Ford Coupe.”

School publications are few and far between, due to wartime shortages of everything but spirit. The slim volumes that are printed highlight elementary students’ efforts with the Junior Red Cross, war bond pledge campaigns, air raid and first aid drills, sugar rationing procedures, and draft registration.

In this war year of 1943, we Shaker High Seniors have suddenly found that our lives have undergone a change. We have had to face life squarely: we have had to work harder, think straighter, and look more searchingly into the future. — 1943 Gristmill yearbook.

The 1950s: A Commitment to Peaceful Integration

Shaker experiences a postwar building boom. As color television comes on the scene, Mercer Elementary opens, followed by Byron Junior High School.

The Supreme Court issues its historic decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, calling for the desegregation of all public schools throughout the nation. The governor of Arkansas





deploys the Arkansas National Guard to block nine African-American students from entering an all-white high school in Little Rock. U.S. troops are called in to protect and escort the students.

The home of one of the first African-American families to move into Shaker Heights is bombed. In response, Shaker residents come together and form the Ludlow Community Association, calling for peaceful integration in Shaker Heights. Black and white neighbors band together to thwart further violence and white flight.

The 1960s: Radical Shifts in Style and Substance

When I came to the High School in 1964, all girls had to wear skirts. The dean of girls would walk the hallways with a carpet square on a handle. She would have the girls kneel on the carpet square to make sure their skirts touched the floor. The dean of boys told me I would never be respected by my students because I did not wear a tie. — Terry Pollack, a newly minted social studies teacher in 1964.

But the times, they are a-changing. Protests over U.S. involvement in the Viet Nam war reach even the quiet streets of Shaker Heights: Some students burn their library cards as a symbolic stand-in for draft cards, while others begin to don

jeans, long hair, and the occasional mustache. Smoking is permitted in the Egress, popularly known as “Hippie Hall,” as a way to keep kids “safe” while smoking.

Shaker students elect their first black student council president, the year before Cleveland elects Carl B. Stokes as the first black mayor of a major city. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee recruits several Shaker students to go south to help register black voters.

On the emerging technology front, Mercer is chosen as one of four schools in the nation to participate in Encyclopedia Britannica’s Project Discovery, a pilot program to introduce the new-fangled technology of educational filmstrips.

The 1970s: A Pioneering Integration Plan

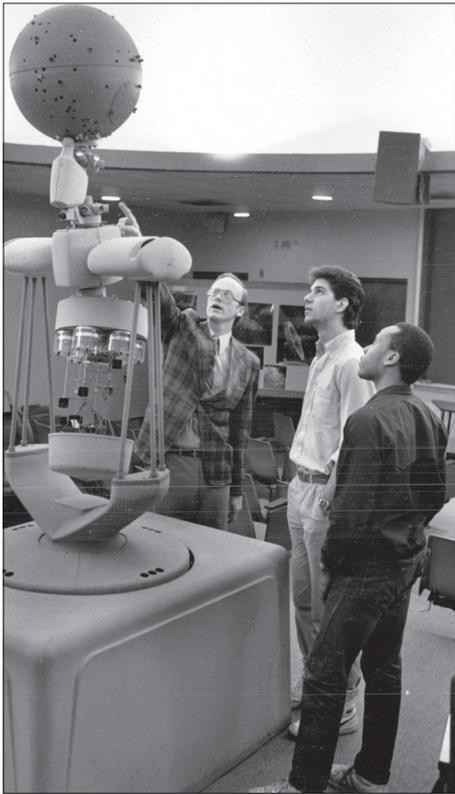
The school board introduces the Shaker Schools Plan, a voluntary cross-enrollment program designed to promote racial integration in the Schools – the only one of its kind in the Greater Cleveland area, and one of few in the nation.

A state-of-the-art planetarium is installed at the High School, featuring a Spitz Model A4 projector, three years before NASA launches Skylab, America’s first experimental space station.

The High School initiates an exchange program with a sister school in Goslar, Germany – a robust relationship now in

1960s: Shaker students elect their first black student council president, the year before Cleveland elects Carl B. Stokes as the first black mayor of a major city. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee recruits several Shaker students to go south to help register black voters.





1980s: The Board of Education elects its first woman president, the year before Geraldine Ferraro becomes first female candidate for U.S. vice president.

its 33rd year.

In 1976, the Ohio General Assembly passes House Bill 920, requiring school districts to seek voter-approved levies as their only source of increased revenue to keep up with inflation. The following year, Shaker residents overwhelmingly approve an operating levy to maintain the standards of the Shaker Schools, as well as a hefty bond issue to improve the District's aging buildings.

This response of confidence and concern is a tremendous inspiration to all those involved with the Shaker Schools. The financial support will preserve the best of the past and enrich the possibilities of the future for all Shaker Heights pupils – the ultimate beneficiaries of the citizens' decision. – Charles W. Landefeld, president of the Board of Education and Jack P. Taylor, superintendent, 1977.

The 1980s: An Expanding Worldview

A group of citizens dedicated to preserving excellence in the schools forms the Shaker Schools Foundation to accept private donations for the benefit of the schools. Soon afterward, the Shaker Heights Alumni Association creates its Hall of Fame and inducts 10 distinguished graduates. More than 150 have since joined their ranks.

The Board of Education elects its first woman president, the year before Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first female major party candidate for U.S. vice president. In response to the changing times, all-day kindergarten and after-care are introduced at some elementary school buildings, and the at-home lunch option is discontinued.

Shaker students expand their worldview through the High School's pioneering Asian Studies program (now in its 26th year), in which students learn about the cultures of India, China, and Japan. It becomes the second high school Asian Studies program in the United States, and the first to partner with a major museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art.

High School students launch the Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR). The program now attracts more than 250 students each year who work to help elementary students and community groups embrace diversity. Schools across the U.S. emulate the program.

Second-semester exams for seniors are briefly declared "irrelevant" – and are quickly re-instated the following year due to an acute outbreak of "senioritis."

The High School library takes a flyer on a new brand of computer called Apple.

The post-baby boom decline in enrollment requires the closing of four Shaker elementary schools and the reorganization of grade levels. Ninth-graders head to the High School, and the Middle School (formerly Byron Junior High) houses all seventh- and eighth-graders.

The 1990s: The Internet Era Begins

With the spread of the Internet, all of the Shaker Schools get wired. E-mail begins to emerge as an acceptable way to hand in student work (or beg for an extension). School libraries are transformed by the addition of online research resources to their print collections.

As world barriers crumble, visiting Shaker students bring home chunks of the Berlin Wall as souvenirs. The High School



Personal History

Still vigorous and provocative after 48 years on the Shaker Heights High School faculty, social studies teacher Terry Pollack has been witness to nearly half of the District's history. The vault that is his mind contains scores of memories, anecdotes, and even songs — complete with lyrics — that bring the history of the schools to life. Herewith, some of his recollections.

BY TERRY POLLACK

In 1963, just before I joined the faculty, two Shaker teachers had been fired for teaching controversial topics and openly contesting U.S. involvement in the Viet Nam war. There was quite a divide between the older and younger faculty about whether or not to support those teachers, and as a new teacher it was difficult trying to figure out where to sit in the cafeteria.

Back in the '60s, we used to throw a party for the students called the Exam Bang to celebrate the end of finals. It was a big carnival, with dunking booths, music, and food. It was a time when we as teachers could say, "I take my teaching seriously, but now let's have some fun."

It was also a time of great student empowerment. There was a student disciplinary council that decided on discipline for student infractions. I've always believed that kids learn more from each other than they do from their teachers. By the end of the '60s, Shaker had become a school without walls. The outside world began impacting what was happening in the schools.



The 1970s were a time of tremendous student activism and involvement, especially among seniors who had to register for the draft. We had a school assembly on the front lawn after the Kent State shootings, with ministers, rabbis, and priests. I recall an assembly where some students from Case Western Reserve University broke in and knocked over an American flag during a speech by Governor George Voinovich. I chased them on foot, all the way down to University Circle, because I wanted to talk to them about the issues involved with free speech. I missed three classes and had to hitch a ride back to school. My students just carried on without me.

We had a big turnover of faculty when many long-serving faculty members retired in the 1970s. One thing that strikes me is that Shaker has always been willing to invest in high-quality teachers. Shaker became known as a school for teachers you want to keep. It was and still is a phenomenal place to work, because you have the freedom to really teach.

In 1983, we hired a guy named

Ted Paynther to do an assembly for us on diversity. At the assembly, he assumed the persona of "John Gray," a white racist. He played bad cop, and I played good cop. Later in the day, he showed the kids pictures of his black family members, and we had some very interesting discussions about race and diversity. This assembly helped inspire several kids to create the Student Group on Race Relations.

In the 1990s, individual class teachers were greatly impacted by No Child Left Behind and state testing requirements. The District invested heavily in teacher training, and individualized education became more necessary to address a changing student body population. Despite these challenges, the schools have never surrendered their academic excellence.

Over the years, the teachers have changed, the principals have changed, but the philosophy has remained the same: A community is known by the schools it keeps. I have been consistently amazed at the professionalism and dedication of faculty and staff in the Shaker Schools.

launches an exchange program with a sister school in Pskov, Russia, and Shaker students visit the People's Republic of China for the first time.

The school board approves full-day, tuition-free kindergarten for all children in the District.

The first Night for the Red & White raises \$42,000, allowing for a significant upgrade in technology items for the Shaker Schools. This "black-tie block party" now draws about 700 people per year and has raised nearly \$2 million to date for educational enrichment.

A group of African-American students forms the Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) Scholars to address a disparity in achievement between white and black students, an issue of great concern in Shaker and the nation. The MAC program inspires the creation of similar programs at Woodbury and Shaker Middle School – and across the nation.

The Turn of the Millennium: Witnessing History

Innocence is lost as terrorists attack on U.S. soil, destroying the World Trade Center's twin towers, damaging the Pentagon, and claiming nearly 3,000 lives. Nevertheless, Shaker students continue to embrace their global neighbors. The High School choir sings at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, one day after the death of Pope John Paul II. The High School marching band performs on the Great Wall of China.

The High School's auditoriums are overhauled, with substantial support from private donors. The Small Auditorium becomes a high-tech space for instruction and presentations. With the renovation and restoration of the Large Auditorium, Shaker's theatre and music programs finally have a home commensurate with their quality.

Barack Obama is elected as the nation's first African-American president. The following year, President Obama honors Shaker Heights with his first visit to the High School for a nationally televised town hall meeting on healthcare reform.

2000s: The High School choir sings at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, one day after the death of Pope John Paul II. The High School marching band performs on the Great Wall of China.

He honors the community with a return visit to the High School in 2012 to deliver remarks about the nation's economy. Many students attend and participate, leading the pledge of allegiance, singing the national anthem, performing jazz music for the crowd, and taking photographs for the Gristmill and Shakerite.

Today: The Global Campus

Shaker maintains its enviable record of college admissions, national recognition of student accomplishments, and community support.

The Shaker Schools' highly successful guest teacher program brings native Chinese speakers to teach Mandarin to students throughout the District.

The Asian Studies class continues to thrive, with frequent visits to India, Ja-

pan, and the People's Republic of China.

Students also travel to every corner of the world through orchestra, choir, and band trips, and through exchange programs with sister schools in China, Germany, France, England, Japan, and Latin America.

As all eight schools embrace the highly respected International Baccalaureate program, Shaker students are more actively engaged and globally connected than ever before.

We were building a school district that included the world long before International Baccalaureate existed. I don't know if residents fully understand the uniqueness of what we offer, that other school districts can't touch – our investment in the arts, in culture, our music programs, our exchange programs. Shaker truly envisions the world as its stage.

– Terry Pollack

