

## MEMORIES OF OLD AMBLER HIGH SCHOOL

by Newton M. Howard

In the Spring of 1922 Ambler's School District purchased a tract of land from the Joseph Haywood Estate. Located on Tennis Avenue, east of Ridge Avenue, this was to be the site of Ambler's first high school building. The Haywood Estate was massive, and included all land fronting on Bethlehem Pike, between Mount Pleasant and Tennis Avenues. It extended down beyond present-day Hendricks Street. Today, in 1999, we know it as the land housing the Artman Home complex, the Haywood Park housing development, a funeral home, apartment units and many other smaller housing projects,

Prior to this time high school classes had been held in the building on Forest Avenue. The entire Ambler School System in 1922 consisted of the Mattison Avenue and the Forest Avenue schools.

Just weeks later, the Ambler School Board elected E. E. Kerschner as principal of this new high school. Some of the new teachers

appointed at this time were: Raymond Duncan, the Misses Alice Kelly, Anna L. Potteiger, Lucy G. Coyle, Bessie Dunmoyer, Bessie Lightkep, Ardella Styer and May M. Rynear.

By August of 1922, work had already begun with cellar excavation being done by local contractor Charles Gerhart. The structure, of brick, concrete and steel, was to be as nearly fireproof as possible. The two-story building would measure 160 feet by 73 feet in depth. J. M. Kirk received the plumbing contract, while that for electrical work was awarded to C. M. Riley. There would be 15 class rooms as well as a large auditorium, which could be used as a study hall, gymnasium, etc.

During the high school's construction, a temporary building was erected on the Forest Avenue grounds. It contained two rooms, capable of housing 42 pupils. At the year's end, construction seemed to slow down, with materials slow in arriving at the site.

The start of 1923 saw a re-newed effort to speed up building operations, with a



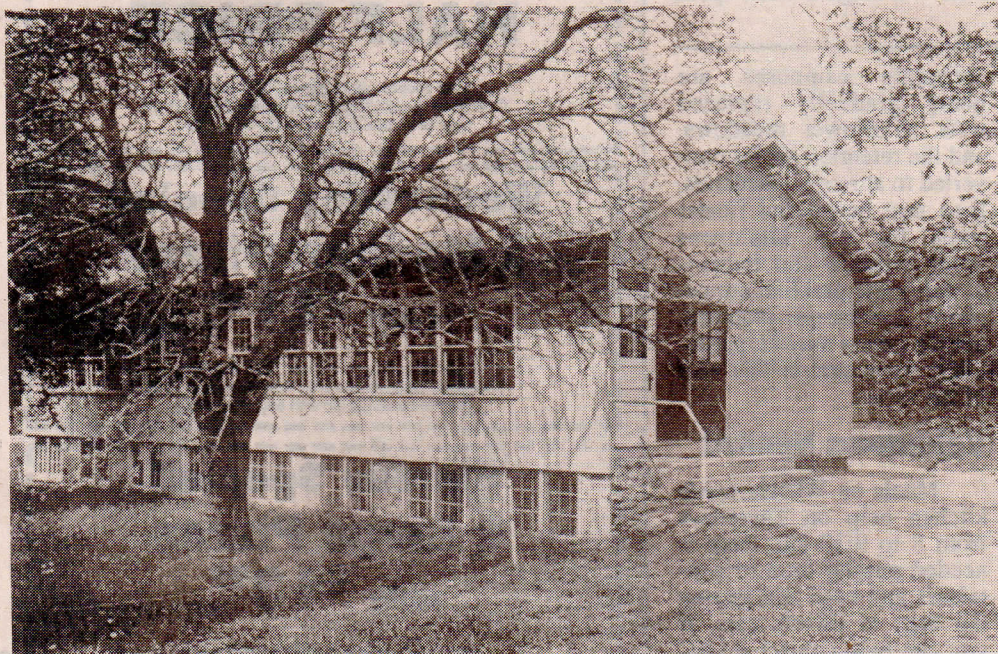
Entrance to Original Ambler High School on Tennis Ave. Opened in 1923.

possible opening scheduled for the start of the Fall term. Just weeks before opening date, the contract for window shades was awarded to local merchant Anthony Lapetina, proprietor of the Ambler Furniture Company. His prices were better than

either Gimbels or Snellenbergs, both prominent Philadelphia department stores.

Though not completed, the new high school was opened at the start of the school year with an enrollment of 267 students. The following December saw the opening of the new auditorium. A special musical program featuring classical and semi-classical music by well-known artists was witnessed by an audience of more than 500.

Something new was added to the old Ambler High School in 1930 when the Ambler School Board purchased additional land from the Haywood Estate. It was of an irregular shape, measuring 167 x 240 x 75 feet. On this land a frame structure was erected for use by the Industrial Arts students. The work was done by the "Shop" crew, under the supervision of Mr. Abram "Chief" Hunsicker, Industrial Arts Instructor since about 1923.



Industrial Arts Shop built in 1930 by students under the direction of Abram "Chief" Hunsicker, assisted by Joseph Kunsman.

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Joe Kunsman came later as an assistant to Hunsicker. The Shop saw service for many years thereafter. It was in 1938-39 that a new metal and wood-working shop replaced it when major additions to Ambler High School included a brand new Industrial Arts department.

This addition to the high school included a new and larger auditorium, and here the AHS Class of 1939 became the first to use its facilities for graduation ceremonies. Prior to this time all commencement exercises had been held at the historic Ambler Opera House, a part of Keasbey & Mattison Company's office building.

The year 1950 saw the addition of the Community Memorial Stadium on the grounds of Ambler High School. This was erected with funds subscribed by families and friends of Veterans of the Second World War. The stadium however had a short life span, being razed about 1973 along with the old high school with all its additions, only to be replaced with a housing development.

Thus in the time frame of about half a century, Ambler had witnessed both the construction and demolition of its first high school and Community Memorial stadium, with no traces of either remaining today.