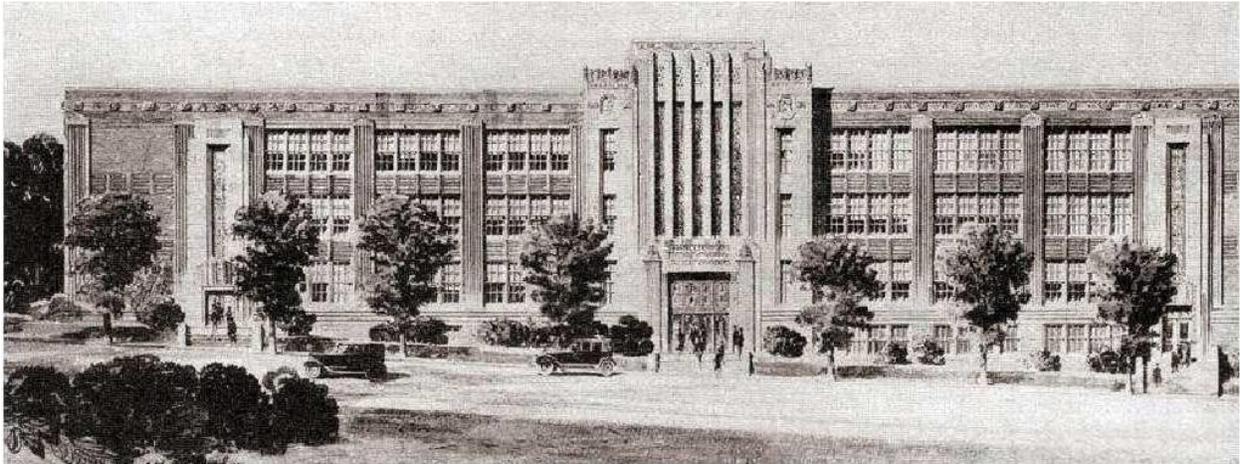


The History of Weequahic High School



Weequahic High School is **84 years old**. The building is located at **279 Chancellor Avenue** in the South Ward of Newark. It is currently being considered for landmark status. The construction of the high school, designed in the art deco style of architecture by the firm, **Guilbert and Betelle**, was completed in 1932. The high school opened for classes on **September 11, 1933** with **2,056 students**.

WHAT'S A WEEQUAHIC?

The name "**Weequahic**" refers to the "**head of the creek**," the high ground that served as a boundary between the lands of the Hackensack and Raritan and later as the partition between the cities of Newark and Elizabeth, known today as Weequahic Park. The high school and nearby park was named "**Weequahic**" to honor Newark's Native American roots.

FEEDER SCHOOLS:

The elementary and junior high schools that fed students to Weequahic were **Bragaw Avenue School**, **Chancellor Avenue School**, **Hawthorne Avenue School**, **Maple Avenue School**, **Peshine Avenue School**, **George Washington Carver School**, and **Clinton Place Junior High School**. In the early years, some students also came from **Avon Avenue School**, **Bergen Street School**, and **Madison Avenue School**.

STUDENT BODY:

In the earlier years, the student body was over 2,000. To accommodate extra students, there was a 9th grade annex, first at Hawthorne Avenue School and later at Chancellor Avenue School. Until 1963-64, when one-year school terms were instituted, students graduated in January and June.

Currently, with more magnet and charter schools, the student population of Weequahic is under 500. However, the goal of the district is to grow the school to a 1,000 students in the coming years.

ETHNIC/RACIAL MAKEUP:

The ethnic/racial makeup of Weequahic students parallels the changing demographics of the city of Newark. For the first 40 years, Weequahic was predominantly white and Jewish. That population eventually moved to the suburbs by the late 1960's. For the past 44 years the high school has been primarily African-American.

FIRST PRINCIPAL:

The first Principal was **Max Herzberg** and he remained as the leader of the high school for 18 years until his retirement in 1951. He was a noted educator and writer. As an author and editor he wrote or edited fifty-seven books and pamphlets. In 1920, he became literary editor of the Newark Evening News, and from its inception in 1947 until his death, he edited the Sunday Book Page.

ALBERT EINSTEIN WEEQUAHIC CONNECTION:

In 1934, **Professor Albert Einstein** sent a letter to the high school, entitled "**Thoughts on Education and on American Schools in Particular**," that was published in the Calumet, the school newspaper. The letter was printed by 1300 newspapers all over the world.

HISTORIC MURALS:

Weequahic is home to one of the most important installations of public art in New Jersey: the "**Enlightenment of Man**," a New Deal-era mural painted by **Michael Lenson**, who was the director of NJ mural activities for the Federal Art Project of the **Works Progress Administration (WPA)**. The murals were installed in the lobby of the high

school in 1939. Lenson also painted the murals at Newark City Hall and at a few other venues in Newark.

The story told by the Weequahic murals represents eight time periods in the history of humankind. They are as follows: **Prehistory, Early Civilizations, The Dark Ages, The Renaissance, The Enlightenment, The Industrial Revolution, Modern Times and The Future.** The Weequahic High School Alumni Association and Lesson's son, Barry, has established a fundraising campaign to restore the murals.

"NUMBER ONE" HIGH SCHOOL IN NEW JERSEY:

From its inception in 1933 through the middle of the 1960's, Weequahic was considered to be the finest academic high school in New Jersey. In the book, **The Enduring Community** by William Helmreich, Weequahic is described in the following way: **"Its primary claim to fame, and justifiably so, was its student body and its faculty. It achieved a reputation as one of the best high schools in the country...The faculty at Weequahic High was outstanding by all accounts. The staff had terrific raw material to work with... Weequahic students were among the best in the land. "**

In August, 1950, Weequahic was rated as "one of the most outstanding high schools in the country" by the Commission of Secondary Schools of the Middle Atlantic States Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. On June 17, 1960, this same organization praised Weequahic's college program.

On December 17, 1963, Weequahic **was ranked 1st in NJ and 56th in the nation** in the number of graduates who had earned a Ph.D. during the preceding five years. In 1964, Weequahic had more national merit scholars than any high school in the tristate area.

WHS LEADERSHIP:

Besides Max Herzberg, other principals at Weequahic were: Michael Conovitz, Julius Bernstein, David Weingast, Benjamin Epstein, William Monprode, Morris Brinn, Charles Brodsky, James Barrett, Patrick Restaino, Dr. James Wright, Claude Scott Bey, Lawrence Majors, Richard Williams, Charles Meadows, Edna Bailey (the first woman Principal), Ronald Stone, Elizabeth Haden, John Toner, Faheem Ellis, Lisa McDonald, and Andre Hollis.

Weingast and Epstein also became Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education. Bernstein became the Superintendent of Schools in Livingston. **Faheem Ellis**, a 1996 graduate of the high school, is only the second graduate to become Principal of Weequahic. The first was **Claude Scott Bey**, a 1965 grad, who returned as Principal in the early 1980's and later became an Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Jill Graifer Watkins, a 1961 graduate, was Vice Principal in the early 90's.

FACULTY:

Weequahic had many exceptional teachers, department chairpersons, guidance counselors, and administrators – too many to name all – but here are a few: **Hannah Litzky (1934-1973)**, English; **Henry Melnik**, Music; **Sadie Rous (1935-1968)**, Social Studies; **Robert Lowenstein**, Foreign Languages; **Walter Ackerman**, Vice Principal; **Jeanette Lappe**, Social Studies; **George Martino**, Science; **Marie O'Connor (1940-1958)**, English; **Charles Schneider**, Physical Education; **Seymour Weiss**, Industrial Arts; **Miriam Hample**, Business; **Morton Seltzer**, Mathematics; **Florence Misurell (1949-1975)**, Foreign Languages; **Constance Bowerman**, Vice Principal; **Max Pollack**, Mathematics; **Alice Saltman (1933-1965)**, Art; **Sydney Rosenfeld**, Science; **Leo Pearl (1957-1980)** Vice Principal; **Janet Findley (1971-2010)** English; **Nicholas Falzarano**, Guidance Counselor; **Cheryl Howard**; Special Ed.; **Annie Williams**, English.

Hilda Lutzky (1937-1975) taught English at Weequahic for **38** years. She is currently 104 years old. **Loraine White (1969-2010)**, a 1964 graduate, was on the faculty at Weequahic for 41 years as a physical education/health teacher, coach, substance abuse counselor, and administrator. She was the only female football coach in the city of Newark.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES:

For many years, Weequahic offered more foreign languages -**French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, and Hebrew**- than any other high school in the city. In the early 60's, it also had a **Swahili** language club. Some students, who lived out of the Weequahic school district, were able to attend the high school if they took a language that was offered at Weequahic, but not offered at their district high school.

ATHLETICS

Weequahic was also known for its athletic prowess. Throughout the years it experienced great success in basketball, track, and swimming. The high school is well known for its outstanding basketball teams under the leadership of coaches Art Lustig, Les Fein, Dave Klurman and Frank Gavin. Weequahic was known for its athletic prowess. Seymour "Swede" Masin, a 1938 grad, was considered to be the best all-around athlete at the high school, in Newark, and in New Jersey.

After years of "almost," the high school won its first State Group IV Championship in 1962 and repeated as State Champions in 1966 and 1967. The 1967 team went undefeated, was the number one team in the country, and was nicknamed the "Dream Team." Over a two-year period in 1966-67, Weequahic won 40 games in a row. Coach Les Fein was selected as U.S. High School Coach of the Year. It also won the state basketball championship in 1972 and 2001.

In 2013, the girls' basketball team, under the leadership of Coach Amiri Baraka, Jr., had a 23-4 record and were the Super Essex Conference Liberty Division champions with an unbeaten record and also won their Group 2 sectional title.

On the gridiron, Weequahic won its first city championship in football in 1951 and repeated in 1967 and 1968. In 2006, under the leadership of Coach Altarik White, the Indians won their first state sectional football championship and repeated in 2016, under Coach Brian Logan, a 1982 graduate.

INDIANS IN THE PROS:

Some of Weequahic's athletes made it to the professional ranks. Herb Krautblatt Kay, (1944), Burton Geltzeiler (1945), Alvin Attles (1955), Gerry Greenspan (1959) and Dennis "Mo" Layton (1967) were basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Al "Bubba" Baker (1972), Hasson Arubakrr (1987), Taj Smith (2002) and Adonis Thomas, (2006) were football players in the National Football League (NFL) - and Donald "Pinky" Johnson (1972) was an NFL coach. Marquis "Bo" Porter (1990) was the manager for the Houston Astros Major League baseball team.

Alvin Attles was also the championship coach of the Golden State Warriors in 1975, His 17 points made him the 2nd highest scorer on the Philadelphia Warriors team when

Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points against the NY Knicks in a 169-147 victory on March 2, 1962 at Hershey Sports Arena in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Attles's **number 16** was retired by the Golden State Warriors. He also serves as a team ambassador. On February 7, 2015, Attles' **number 22** was retired by North Carolina A&T, the first ever retired by the team. He was inducted into the **Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame** in 1993 and is a member of the **Newark Sports Hall of Fame**. He has been on the Warriors' payroll in one capacity or another for **58 years**, the longest uninterrupted streak of any person for one team.

Al Baker was the NFL 1978 **Defensive Player of the Year** and was named to three Pro Bowls. In 2004, he was picked as **the 9th greatest pass rusher** in NFL history by Sports Illustrated. In 2007, he was named to the **Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame**. He is also a member of the **Newark Sports Hall of Fame**.

UNTERMANN FIELD:

In 1949, Untermann Field was dedicated in honor of **William M. Untermann**, a Newark attorney. What was once an empty lot near Chancellor Avenue School, Untermann became Weequahic's home field for football, soccer, track and field, and baseball. In 2007, the Weequahic High School Alumni Association replaced the plaque (that had disappeared) on the famous "Rock" outside of the entrance to Untermann Field.

In 2013, the **Field House** at Untermann Field was renamed in honor of **Coach Burney L. Adams**, who led the football team for 34 years from 1967 to 2001.

BEST BAND IN THE LAND:

Throughout the generations, Weequahic has always had a fine music department, orchestra, and an outstanding marching band under the leadership of **Dr. Henry Melnik, Frank Scocozza, Vernon Ross, and Michael Page**. On an ongoing basis, the band won honors both in local and national competitions. In 1944, Melnik was honored by receiving the Music War Council of America's distinguished service citation in recognition of the band's outstanding contributions to the home front war effort.

WHS MISCELANEOUS:

The high school's nickname/mascot is the **Indians**. The school newspaper is the **Calumet**, the literary magazine is named **Ergo**, and the yearbook is the **Legend**. The school's colors are **Orange and Brown**. The student governing body is the **Orange and Brown Association (OBA)**. At one time, Weequahic had student hall monitors known as **Sagamores** and a student court system.

WORLD WAR II:

Many Weequahic students contributed to the war effort in the 1940's by joining the armed services. At home, students, faculty and families raised nearly one million dollars selling war bonds through rallies, drives and shows. A plaque outside the auditorium memorializes **57 Weequahic students who lost their lives in World War II**.

MRS. ROOSEVELT VISITS WHS:

In 1951, First Lady **Eleanor Roosevelt** addressed more than 1,500 students at an assembly at Weequahic. She was introduced as the *"First Lady of the World."*

NEW CONTRUCTION:

In 1958, an **addition** to the high school was constructed which provided more space for classrooms, offices, and storage on all three floors. A **new cafeteria** with north and south wings was built in the mid-70's on land between the high school and Chancellor Avenue School. The old cafeteria was renovated and turned into a media center and library. In the 90's some of the classrooms became computer centers.

In 2008, **Untermann Field** received a "state of the art" facelift which include artificial turf, a rubberized running track, upgraded bleachers, a renovated field house and bathrooms, and a new scoreboard.

The **Ronald G. Stone Community Gymnasium** opened in 2010, housing a new physical education facility, a 2,000-seat basketball arena, a community meeting room, locker rooms and offices, an exercise room, and a large parking area. The basketball arena was named after Weequahic's legendary basketball coach, **Les Fein**.

The Alumni Association installed signage for the inside of the building and banners for the arena. The new gymnasium which is connected to the high school was built on the site of the Chancellor Avenue School playground. Its entrance is on Goldsmith Avenue and it is adjacent to Underman Field.

ADULT SCHOOL

The **Weequahic Adult School**, which offered a wide variety of evening classes covering many different areas of interest, served the local community from the 1950's through the 1970's. For many years, the directors of the school was **Dorothy Rowe Scott**, a 1938 graduate, and **Louis Dultz**, a 1949 graduate and science teacher at the high school.

WHS GRADS WORKING IN THE NEWARK SCHOOL SYSTEM:

Some Weequahic graduates- who were staff at the high school were as follows: Sidney Sperber (1935), Carolyn Parm (1938), Louis Dultz (1948), Gary Barr (1955), Morey Bobrow (1959), Maria Piacente Galeota (1959), Barbara Brookman (1961), Patricia Joyner (1962), Phil Yourish (1964), Harvey Ritter (1964), Morris Horwitz (1964), Ben Ribnick (1964), Barry Muster (1965), Gwen McClendon (1965), Dave Lieberfarb (1965), James Lowenstein (1965), Linda Norton (1967), William Southerland (1969), Rosalind Robinson (1977), Cheryl Howard (1978), Anthony Timmons (1980), Darryl Taylor (1987), Yolanda Bogan-Cassidy (1987), and Waunita Scott (1991).

Weequahic alumni are well represented in the Newark Public Schools as instructors, department chairs and administrators. David Wright (1966) was the Principal of South 17th Street School. Carl Gregory (1966) was the Principal of Morton Street School. Joseph Brown (1969) was the Principal of Louise Spencer School, where Sharon Pogash (1965) was the Vice Principal. William Saks (1964) was the Vice Principal at Burnett Street School. Fred Chatman (1995) was an administrator with the Newark Public Schools. At the central office, Dr. Glenda Seals Johnson-Green (1967) was an assistant to the Superintendent of Schools.

WHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

In 1997, two Weequahic grads - **Hal Braff (1952)** and **Sheldon Bross (1955)** - started the Weequahic High School Alumni Association. In 2001, the group became

a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with an alumni office at the high school. **Phil Yourish** was the founding Executive Director from 2001 to 2014. The group is run by a **21-member Board of Trustees**.

With the goal of providing opportunity to the students at the high school, the Association has raised more than **one-half million dollars** for scholarships, provided support for the marching band, athletic teams, and student activities, and organized trips to Paris France, Montreal, and Washington. Currently celebrating its **20th anniversary**, the WHSAA has become one of the largest, most active, and successful high school alumni groups in Newark and New Jersey.

DIAMOND JUBILEE:

In 2008, the Weequahic High School Alumni Association celebrated the high school's 75th Birthday with a Diamond Jubilee Celebration which included the first Alumni Hall of Fame Ceremony at Temple B'nai Abraham in Livingston. 12 alumni and/or faculty were inducted into the first class of the Alumni Hall of Fame.

THE OSBORNE TERRACE LIBRARY:

The neighborhood branch library was located at 355 Osborne Terrace. The Weequahic branch opened its doors in **May 1929**, and was the sixth branch library of The Newark Public Library system to open between 1923 and 1946. It underwent a \$1 million dollar renovation in 1992. On October 23, 2006, Pulitzer Prize winning author **Philip Roth** was honored by the City of Newark and the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee. The reception was on the 2nd floor of the Weequahic branch library. Roth stated: *"I couldn't be more thrilled by any recognition accorded to me anywhere on earth,"*

BORN AT THE BETH:

Many Weequahic students were born at nearby Beth Israel Hospital, located on Lyons Avenue and Osborne Terrace. The **Newark Beth Israel Medical Center**, previously Newark Beth Israel Hospital, is the largest hospital in the city. The Beth was founded in 1901 by the Jewish community to give Jewish physicians, denied access to practice medicine in other hospitals because of their religion, an institution in which to provide medical care.

In 1902, **The Beth's School of Nursing** was founded, followed by the first Pediatric Unit (among the first in the nation) in 1903. The original hospital was located on High Street and in 1928 moved to the Weequahic section, where it is presently located. It is also home to the **Children's Hospital of New Jersey**. With the sale of the hospital to the Saint Barnabas Corporation in 1996, its proceeds were used to establish the **Healthcare Foundation of NJ**, led by **Lester Z. Lieberman**, a 1948 Weequahic grad.

It is one of two hospitals in New Jersey where heart transplants are performed and the only hospital in New Jersey certified to perform lung transplants. In 2011, the Newark Beth Israel Medical Center was ranked among the **top 50 hospitals** in the United States for specialty care in cardiology and heart surgery. The hospital has been in existence for **117 years**.

Many Weequahic grads have worked at the hospital as physicians, dentists, nurses, administrators and office personnel. **Dr. Victor Parsonnett**, a 1941 WHS grad, is the most well-known for his pioneering work in cardiology.