

SADDLE BROOK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – DECEMBER 2014
A FRANKLIN SCHOOL REUNION

Elementary school class reunions are uncommon, and I was surprised when Sal Cusmano, Franklin School's current principal, telephoned to invite me to an afternoon reunion of former students. They had left Franklin after grade six in 1958 and were the first to enter our newly built high school as seventh graders. They completed six years there before graduating in 1964. Knowing that I had been principal of Franklin in the seventies and again as an interim in 2000, Mr. Cusmano thought I might be interested in attending. He also knew that as township historian I was always interested in opportunities to retrieve any information from the township's past. The reunion began at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, September 19, with eleven graduates on hand.

Many conversations centered on how the school had changed, including alterations and additions, its teachers and Principal Syd Nixon. At that time, lunch was 25 cents, and a class had as many as 38 students, unthinkable today. Boys and girls had separate entrances. One of the graduates remembered our air raid drills which reflected the Cold War and the threat of atomic bombing. I would mention parenthetically that it later became known that the bombing of a site as close to New York City would be totally devastating to the northern New Jersey area, rendering the shelters and drills unnecessary.



One of the graduates provided a piece of interesting historical information concerning why Franklin School seemed “perched so high” in relation to its surrounding grounds. This is a question that badgered me back as far as the 1950’s when our townwide cub scout meetings were held there. Think of all of the front steps! As principal in the 1970’s I conjectured that the school builders in 1930 and 1931 didn’t want to disturb the fragile sandstone layer on which the school had been built. One of the graduates who had known the area when houses were built on Seventh and Hillside explained that the school and area surrounding it were part of a massive hill. The houses were built and streets laid out years after the school, and contractors had stripped down the area surrounding the school.

In discussing this with the alumni, one offered me a picture of the school as the “hill” was being removed. Another small but interesting piece of our history had been put into place!

I thank Mr. Cusmano for this and his many efforts to promote positive community relations.

Jack Wasdyke
Township Historian