

Before 1850, education beyond Public School for the majority of Watertown children was rarely considered necessary. Although the village had two of the earliest schools at the Head-of-the-Lake area, neither of them provided free education for the pupils, or schooling beyond the age of 14 years.

The earliest, a log school on the south west corner of Mill and Dundas Streets under the direction of Miss Mary Hopkins was opened in 1816. Reputedly built and funded by Watertown's first settler, Col. Alexander Brown, it operated intermittently and eventually closed when Miss Hopkins left to marry and the Brown's children traveled to Hannahsville in neighbouring Nelson Township.

The second school, called 'Greenlee School', built in 1827 on a corner of James Grierson's farm at Flamboro and Dundas Streets was also privately operated and supported entirely by parents paying fees.

During the 1840's, the work of Egerton Ryerson, Superintendent of Education, resulted in the establishment of Common or Public Schools throughout the province and by 1849, such a school was operating in Watertown, in a stone building located at the south end of the village.

In 1854, Trustees for a Grammar or High School were listed in the same Minutes Book as those appointed for the Common School, although it is not clear if the schools were operating in the same building. The Principal of the Grammar School, Mr. McLennan, was paid an annual salary of £150, his two Teachers or Assistants, just £80.

The boards amalgamated in 1857, becoming known as The Joint Board of the Grammar and Common School Trustees. Entries in the Minutes Book (held by the Flamborough Archives) note that meetings were held only occasionally, and were largely concerned with discipline or financial matters.

Following a public meeting in 1867, East Flamborough Township Council was authorized to purchase property for a new school. The property, costing \$260,00, was part of Ebenezzer Culver Griffin's estate, located at the southern end of Main Street. Later the same year, a new two-storey stone school house to accommodate both schools was built.

The permanent name, Watertown High School was introduced in 1871 and for the next thirty-five years, first under Principal, David H. Hunter and then his successor, James Bruce, the school came to be regarded as one of the finest in Ontario. Although the curriculum was very narrow by present-day standards, an 1878 entry in the Minutes Book notes a "request for necessary scientific apparatus and meteorological instruments."

The school's high academic standards attracted students from almost every part of the province, and in 1873, its reputation was

further enhanced when it was awarded the honour of having its students be the first to write the Entrance Exam for entering High School.

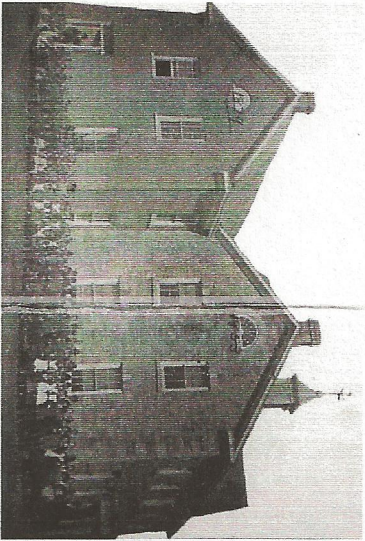
The book, 'Establishment of Schools and Colleges in Ontario 1792-1910' even praised its location "...The Watertown Public and High School is situated on a beautiful plot of ground on the south-eastern side of the village, and from it a fine view of the City of Hamilton, of Burlington Bay, and of the Beach may be obtained. The grounds are planted with a number of fine shade trees and the building is a substantial stone structure."

The last years of the Watertown High School on Main Street were sad and full of controversy. Beginning in 1900, entries in the Minutes Book record many of the minor problems that began to cause the School Board concern and eventually result in its closure. By 1910, conditions appear to have become so serious that the Board selected a site on the outskirts of the village on which to build a new school, but Council refused to approve any monies.

There were grave concerns about the state of the building and the conditions that the students were being taught under. Serious overcrowding had resulted in some classes moving to the top floor of the East Flamborough Township Hall on Mill Street North in 1914. School Inspectors were far from satisfied with the small improvements the Board made following their visits which appear to have become more frequent during this decade.

The village newspaper, 'The Watertown Review' was very vocal about the situation. On 14 August 1919, the editor published an article outlining the conditions that the School Inspector had listed in a report to the Board following his visit. Among the complaints... "the upper floor reached only by means of a stairway is a veritable fire trap; classes at one end of the building can only be accessed by passing through other classes; floor worn to a wretched condition; no private room for teachers; classrooms heated by wood stoves which emit volumes of smoke and with no means of ventilation other than open windows."

The Inspector ended his report stating, "I am of the opinion that the Department should no longer countenance such a state of affairs and I recommend that no further grants be paid to this school while these conditions continue."



The first permanent school. The structure on the right is marked "1853" and on the left "1879".



William Atridge, the School Board Secretary wrote to the Department of Education saying that the Board members "would be very happy to comply with the wishes of the Department and build a new school, if the electorate would supply the funds. However, a new Public School was being constructed and that the present would appear to be an inopportune time to secure the consent of the people for a new High School."

The Secretary's letter did little to improve the situation, for within days another letter arrived from the Department of Education. Written by Mr. Colquhoun, the Deputy Minister, the letter simply said that the situation at the school could not continue and the harsh reality of the situation had to be faced.

The School Board met to discuss the Minister's reply and realized that they had no option but to consider closing the Main Street South School. The Department agreed to allow the Public School students who were housed on the ground floor to remain until their new school being built on Mill Street North was ready to be occupied.

The High School students spent the next seven years being educated in various locations within the village core. Classes continued to be held on the top floor of the East Flamborough Township Hall, in Grace Anglican Church and on the top floor of the new Public School. Once the Mill Street North School was opened in January 1921, the old school was closed and partially demolished in 1931.

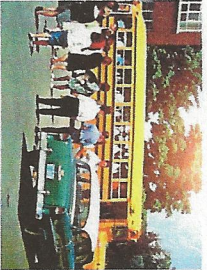
In January 1928, the final group of students from the upper floor of the Watertown Public School walked over to the new high school that had been constructed on the southwest corner of Hamilton and Dundas Streets, at the western entrance to the village. The largest gathering in the history of Watertown, nearly 800 people assembled on 27 February 1928 to attend the opening ceremonies.

Built of red brick, in the Art-Deco Style, at a cost of \$60,000, with an additional \$10,000 for the grounds and equipment, the new school was again surrounded by controversy during the early months. East Flamborough Township had contributed 60% of the costs, the words 'East Flamborough' should be part of the school's name.



The second High School, completed in 1928 and located on Dundas St. The building exists now as condominium residences.

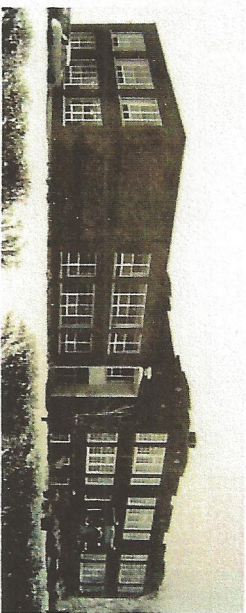
At the official opening by Dr. F. W. Merchant, Provincial Director of Education, the name, Waterdown High School, that dated from the school's beginnings in 1854, was given. Later the same year, the School Board relented, the name was changed to include the words East Flamborough, and then changed once more, to become known as Waterdown District High School.



Consisting of eight classrooms, a Gymnasium and Assembly Hall for the 250 pupils, it was described as a "progressive enterprise." While the original building had been designed to serve the needs of the community, the growth of Waterdown and changes in education during the 1950s necessitated expansion, with additions to the building in 1954, 1956 and 1967-68.



When the first request for expansion was made to Council in 1952 by Principal F. W. Walden, he stated that "more classrooms for the teaching and practical subjects were needed" and "our young people must be sent into life equipped to the best of their ability and we must raise our sights above costs and think of what is going to be best for future generations." A statement Council had difficulty refuting.

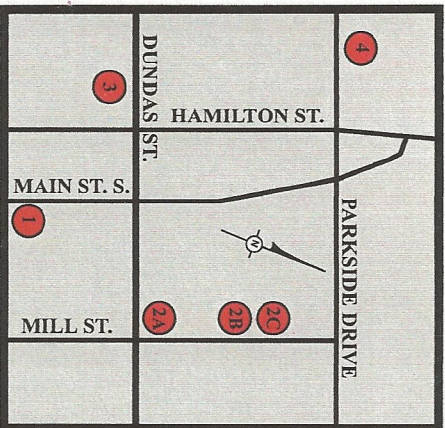


Expansion of the Dundas St. High School in the 1950's and 1960's was necessary to accommodate the area's growing population and education standards. This photo shows the building in the period 1956-1958.

Four decades later a similar claim was made – it resulted in a new \$16.5 million Waterdown District High School being constructed on Parkside Drive, which was officially opened on 17 April 1993.

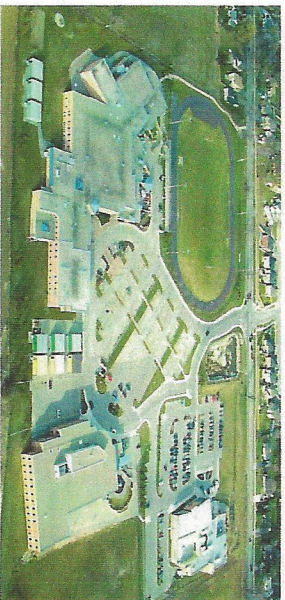


The current Waterdown District High School



School Locations, Names and Dates

- 1 Main Street South ~ 1854 to 1919
Waterdown Grammar School, Waterdown High School & Continuation School
- 2 Mill Street North ~ 1914 to 1927
 - 2A East Flamborough Twp. Hall (1914 to 1921)
 - 2B Grace Anglican Church (1919 to 1921)
 - 2C Waterdown Public School (1921- 1927)
Waterdown High School
- 3 Dundas Street ~ 1928 to 1992
Waterdown High School Waterdown & East Flamborough High School Waterdown District High School
- 4 Parkside Drive ~ 1992 to 2004 (present)
Waterdown District High School



The current Waterdown District High School on Parkside Dr. adjacent to Allan A. Greenleaf Elementary School (lower right) and the YMCA (upper right).

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Original "WDHS 150 Anniversary" artwork on cover by Joanne McCallum
Brochure design and printing by Village Gallery and Graphics (Waterdown)



Waterdown District High School



Brief History of Secondary School Education in the Waterdown Area

