

## A Brief History of Where Middletown High School Has Been Located (Updated June 6, 2021)

Did you know that Middletown High School (MHS) was the first public high school in Frederick County?

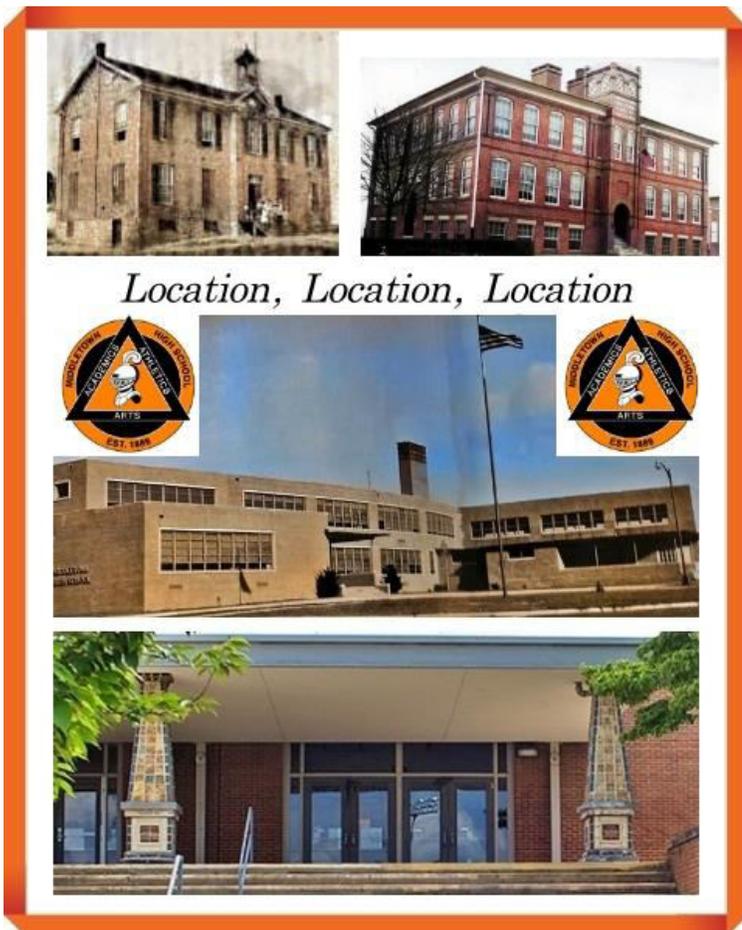
One sunny Florida day during COVID-19 hunker-down, Martin Ritchie, MHS Class of '69 came up with an idea for a great addition to our collection of memories around the Middletown High School.

He, like probably many of us out here, had a lingering curiosity about the overall story on a focused aspect of MHS, "where was the very first MHS school located and how did it move along over the years to eventually its current location?"

Martin Ritchie, Charlie Bach and Doug Martin did some serious research into this and came up with this awesome Word doc loaded with several cool photos and accompanying historical text.

It is our hope that you will not only find this interesting but will be able to make comments and add/or correct some of the information. Enjoy!

Note: This Word doc has also been torn down and reassembled it into a new addition to our Facebook albums, similar to how we created the MHS Yearbook Revitalizations. The rest as they say, is History. The Facebook album can be found as ["A Brief History of Where Middletown High School Has Been Located"](#)



## **Some Interesting Information Before We Dive Into the Photos**

### **Middletown High School was Founded in 1888 and was the First Public High School in Frederick County**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Middletown valley was primarily a farming community, and most boys worked on the farms during the summer and harvest time and only attended school during months they were not needed on the farm. Grammar or grade schools typically taught grades 1-5 or 6. "High schools" were usually found only in larger communities, were typically private and provided "higher schooling," or grades beyond grade 6.

In Middletown, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, grammar school lessons were being held in what was known as the Academy Building. It stood side by side with a United Brethren Church building, also known as the "Martin Box" or "U.B. Church", both of great antiquity, on a site now occupied by the Lutheran Cemetery. The alleyway leading to them extended from West Main Street back to the "Common," and where Green Street Station of the Hagerstown and Frederick Electric Railway was later located. In 1881, the school trustees purchased property for \$150 in order to construct a new grammar school. The new building was erected on the corner of North Jefferson and West Green Streets, on the site of the present Lutheran Cemetery, at a cost of \$3,640 and dedicated in December 1881. However, high school classes were not taught there until 1888 (Rhoderick, G. C., Jr. 1989, p. 308). Prof. W.L. Avis was principal of the high school department (Valley Register, June 8, 1979).

"The School Commissioners also purchased the old Academy Building, which was to be torn down to add additional land for the school site. Townspeople exhibited some regret over the demolition of this old Academy property, because of its historic background, but the die was cast and there were only regrets over the loss to the community of the makeshift school rooms which had served the town for so many years" (Rhoderick, G. C., Jr. 1989, p. 308).

Classes began in the new building immediately following the Christmas holidays in 1881. Only two rooms were used at first and were occupied by the classes taught by Messrs. John H. T. Rudy and S. N. Young. The other two rooms were in the process of receiving their finishing touches (Rhoderick, G. C., Jr. 1989, pp. 308-9).

According to historical records, in 1884 Herman L. Routzahn, son of John and Sarah Coblentz Routzahn, was made School Commissioner by Chief Judge John Ritchie and in 1888, and with the support of the State Board of Education, founded the High School in Middletown, the *first Public High School in the County* (emphasis added) (Williams, T. J. C., & McKinsey, F., 1910, p. 1428).

The high school was located in the schoolhouse built in 1881 and comprised of three additional grades –seven, eight and nine. However, the building was an inadequate structure of only four rooms in which nine grades of pupils were receiving instruction. So, in 1891 the three high school grades were moved into the Grange Hall building on what is now Church Street (The Valley Register, June 8, 1979). According to Larry Bussard, longtime Middletown resident, Grange Hall or The Grangers' Hall was located behind the U.B. Church and the Academy building. All of these structures have long since been torn down.

**MHS's First Graduates**

In 1891, Middletown High School (MHS) had two graduates, **Edward L. Bowlus** and **John P. Shafer**. A Graduation ceremony was held at the Reformed Church.

**Edward L. Bowlus** was born in 1873 and was the son of Asa and Sarah Shafer Bowlus who lived at No. 18 West Main Street. After graduating from MHS, Edward attended the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy.

**Senior Class Roll**

**Edward L Bowlus**  
in the U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999

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Name: Edward L Bowlus

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Yearbook Date: 1906

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School: University of Maryland Pharmacy

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School Location: Baltimore, Maryland, USA

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Grade Completed: Senior

	<p>BORDEN, WILLIAM B., <i>NΣN, Δ, ΠΠΥ, ΘNE</i> . . . Beaufort, N. C. "He is a paralyzer of the female heart" —(he thinks). Age 27, Wt. 138, Ht. 5.7½. Class Treasurer '03-'04, Secretary '04-'05; Treasurer N. C. Club '04-'05; Vice-President Cotillion Club '05-'06; Clinical Assistant. Mercer University.</p>
	<p>BOWLUS, EDWARD L., A.B., <i>K Ψ</i> . . . . . Middletown, Md. "Oh, tell me, pretty maiden; Are there any more at home like you?" (See Webster's definition of "bolus.") Age 33, Wt. 145, Ht. 5.7½. Glee Club 03-'04, Class Executive Committee '04-'05; Clinical Assistant. Johns Hopkins University.</p>
	<p>BRANNON, EARL H., <i>XZX</i> . . . . . Glenville, W. Va. "I should hate to wake up and find that thing staring me in the face." Age 25, Wt. 158, Ht. 5.7½. University of West Virginia.</p>

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Edward became a medical doctor, served as a Clinical Assistant at Johns Hopkins University and returned to Middletown to serve as a practicing physician. He inherited and resided at the house on 18 West Main Street.

He died in 1941. Part of the Bowlus residence eventually became the office of Dr. J. Elmer Harp, Middletown's practicing physician for many years (Rhoderick, G. C., Jr. 1989, pp. 350-351).

## DR. BOWLUS RITES TO BE HELD TODAY

Services For Former Clinical  
Pathologist At Women's  
Hospital Set For 2 P. M.

Physician, Who Was 69 Years  
Old, Had Been In Ill  
Health Since 1931

Funeral services for Dr. Edward Lingan Bowlus, former clinical pathologist at the Hospital for the Women of Maryland, will be held at 2 P. M. today in a funeral parlor in the 4500 block Liberty Heights avenue.

Dr. Bowlus, who was 69 years old, died Wednesday afternoon at the St. Joseph's Hospital. He had been in ill health since 1931.

### Graduate Of J. H. U.

Born in Middletown, Md., on April 4, 1872, he was educated at Frederick High School, later graduating from the Johns Hopkins University. For several years he held the chair of biology at Monmouth College, Monmouth, Ill.

Returning to Maryland, he received his medical degree at the University of Maryland and subsequently was employed as a laboratory chemist at that institution.

Forsaking chemistry, he did post-graduate medical work at the Hopkins and afterwards returned to Middletown as a general practitioner.

### Moved To Connecticut

From 1925 to 1930, Dr. Bowlus was associated with the Women's Hospital as clinical pathologist. In 1930 he went in the same capacity to the Dan-

bury Hospital, Danbury, Conn. His health failing after a year, he was compelled to return to this city.

Dr. Bowlus was a member of the American Medical Association, the Southern Medical Society, the Society of American Clinical Pathologists and the Frederick Medical Society, of which he was president for two years.

### Survived By Widow

He is survived only by his widow, Mrs. Georgie Potter Bowlus, whom he married on October 6, 1915.

The services this afternoon will be conducted by the Rev. Carrington Paulette, pastor of the Fulton Avenue Baptist Church. Burial will follow in the Baltimore Cemetery.

Wrong, he graduated from  
Middletown High School

“**John P. Shafer** attended public and private schools in Frederick City and in Middletown; and, in 1891, was graduated from the Middletown High School, that being the *first class to graduate from any High School in Frederick County* (emphasis added). For three years thereafter, he studied law under the direction of Charles W. Ross, walking from Middletown to Frederick to procure the books which Mr. Ross was kind enough to lend him” (Williams, T. J. C., & McKinsey, F., 1910, p.1544). Since it would have taken about three hours to make the 9-mile journey, over Braddock Heights to Frederick, Mr. Shafer really could brag that he walked 9 miles uphill to school!

And according to the Daily News, “John P. Shafer received the best possible early education until he had completed a high school course graduating from the Middletown High School in 1891” (The [Frederick] Daily News, December 13, 1912). He studied law under the tutelage of Charles W. Ross and became a practicing attorney. He worked in the law offices of Harrison and Byrd in New York City for 13 years becoming the managing attorney. In addition to being a successful attorney he was a contributor to the Philadelphia Press writing principally on subjects of natural history of Western Maryland, and later for the New York Evening Post, Everybody’s Magazine and the New York Morning Telegraph. (The [Frederick] Daily News, December 13, 1912).

Unfortunately, Mr. Shafer contracted consumption (tuberculosis) and died in Arizona in 1912 at age 38 at the height of his productivity. “Mr. Shafer was a lawyer of ability and was considered one of the most intelligent men of this county,” (The [Frederick] Daily News, December 13, 1912). His gravestone is in the Christ Reformed Cemetery in Middletown.

## Our 1891 Graduate **John P. Shafer** in the U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current



Want to get involved? [Click here.](#)

[Report a problem](#)

Name:	John P. Shafer
Birth Date:	1874
Birth Place:	Frederick County, Maryland, United States of America
Death Date:	13 Dec 1912
Death Place:	Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona, United States of America
Cemetery:	Christ Reformed Cemetery
Burial or Cremation Place:	Middletown, Frederick County, Maryland, United States of America
Has Bio?:	N
URL:	<a href="https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/26524892/john-p.-shafer">https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/26524892/john-p.-shafer</a>

Not only did their Middletown education prepare both men for professional career; both of them gave back to their community, Dr. Bowlus by serving as the town doctor and Mr. Shafer in his will. John P. Shafer "provides that his estate, after the deaths of his beneficiaries under the will, shall be used to put three memorial windows in Christ's Reformed Church at Middletown, also that the municipality of Middletown shall have \$1,000 for the most needed public improvement at the time of his death and that \$1,000 shall be distributed in sums not over \$50 each to the worthy poor of Frederick county, to be distributed by his executor," (The [Frederick] Daily News, December 13, 1912). Emory L. Coblentz was his executor.

THE DAILY NEWS, FREDERICK, MD., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1912.

# J. P. SHAFER LOSES IN FIGHT AGAINST DREAD DISEASE

Well-Known Former Countian  
Passed Away Last Night at  
Phoenix Arizona.

HOPEFUL UNTIL LAST OF  
BEATING "HIS OLD ENEMY"

In Letter Written on December 5 Tells  
of Battle Against Consumption—  
Was Lawyer of Ability and Wrote  
For Newspapers.

John P. Shafer, a native of the Middletown Valley, and until about a year ago a resident of Braddock Heights, died at Phoenix, Arizona, at 7.30 o'clock last night from tuberculosis, aged 38 years. Mr. Shafer was a lawyer of ability, and was considered one of the most intelligent men of this county. For some years he practiced law in New York, until poor health caused him to return to his native county. His continued poor health then drove him to Montana, then to Colorado and finally to Arizona.

News of his death was conveyed in a night lettergram to a friend in this city. The telegram was sent last night by Mrs. Shafer from Arizona, and was received this morning. It follows: "Mr. Shafer passed away at 7.30 tonight. Will leave tomorrow night for Los Angeles and will wire you from there."

#### Studied Law Under Mr. Ross.

Mr. Shafer was the son of Mr. and Mrs. John P. Shafer, Middletown. The father was a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College, at Lancaster, and was a noted teacher of young men desiring to enter college. Because of this John P. Shafer received the best possible early education until he had completed a high school course graduating from the Middletown High School in 1891. Mr. Shafer then studied law under the late Charles W. Ross, this city. After completing his course of study Mr. Shafer went to New York City, and entered the law offices of Harrison and Byrd. There he remained for 13 years and became the managing attorney of their offices. Ill health compelled him to give up his work, and go to a sanatorium in the Catskills.

At an early age Mr. Shafer became a contributor to the Philadelphia Press, writing principally on subjects of natural history of Western Mary-

(Continued on Page 6.)

## J. P. SHAFER LOSÉS IN FIGHT AGAINST DREAD DISEASE

(Continued From Page 5.)

land. He later wrote for the New York Evening Post and Everybody's Magazine. During the administration of Mayor McClellan, of New York, Mr. Shafer wrote for the New York Morning Telegraph a series of articles criticizing his administration and comparing his weakness as an executive to that of his father, General McClellan at the Battle of Antietam. These articles were pronounced by Alfred Henry Lewis "The hottest roasts couched in the language of a gentleman, that have appeared in many years concerning a public official of the city of New York."

#### Returns To This County.

In 1908, Mr. Shafer took up his residence at Braddock Heights. He resided here for several years and took an active interest in all the affairs of the county. He was a candidate for the Republican nomination for the House of Delegates a year ago, but was unsuccessful in the primaries.

Some time after this Mr. and Mrs. Shafer left here and went West. While Mr. Shafer realized from the beginning that he had a hard fight, yet he bore up bravely, and even when he went to Arizona, several days ago, he had not lost hope. In a letter under date of December 5, from Phoenix, Ariz., Mr. Shafer tells of his fight. The letter follows:

#### Fight Cost \$15,000.

During the month of November, in Denver, I was running neck and neck with death and tiring rapidly—pulse 120 to 126 and fever 103 degrees. After a consultation of physicians, I was ordered here as a last hope and we dismantled our house in Denver and started here on November 30.

I nearly snuffed out coming over the Taton, New Mexico pass (80,000 feet high) and reached here on the afternoon of December 2, more dead than alive.

But as soon as I breathed the warm atmosphere of Arizona, I put on my fighting clothes and am hopeful of yet beating my old enemy. Tuesday my pulse was down to 90 and my temperature nearly normal. I have been gaining every minute since here.

I have installed myself at the Desert Inn, eight miles east of Phoenix. It is a high-class hotel for unfortunates like me, who have been thrifty enough to have provided themselves with the price. God have mercy on all poor consumptives!

The Inn and surroundings are as near Paradise as you can find on earth. Oranges, grapefruit, figs and

olives grow at the back door. The dessert is across the road. These conditions are the most favorable I have ever found in the five years I have been chasing the cure at an outlay of \$15,000. However, I am not broke yet.

Mrs. Shafer lives at the Colonial Apartments in Phoenix.

#### May Be Buried Here.

Whether the remains of Mr. Shafer will be brought East is not known. He has frequently stated to his friends that at death he desired his body to be incinerated at the nearest crematory. This he has reiterated so frequently that this request will probably be carried out by Mrs. Shafer.

Mr. Shafer is survived by his wife. His mother still resides at Middletown, and the following sisters also survive: Mrs. Samuel A. Butz, Allentown Pa.; Mrs. Eva L. Basen, Middletown; Mrs. W. Porter Shaw, Berlin, Pa.; Miss Mary Eleanor Shafer, Middletown.

# MR. SHAFER'S WILL FILED FOR PROBATE

His Wife and Two Sisters Are  
Left the Estate in Trust.

## \$1,000 FOR POOR OF COUNTY

\$1,000 Also to go to Middletown and  
\$2,000 to Church Cemetery—Will of  
Miss Ellen V. Payne Filed—Number  
of Bequests Made.

John P. Shafer, a native of Middletown, who died recently in Arizona, in his will which has just been probated in the Orphans' Court of Frederick County, makes a number of philanthropic bequests for Middletown and the county. He provides that his estate, after the deaths of the beneficiaries under the will, shall be used to put three memorial windows in Christ's Reformed Church at Middletown, also that the municipality of Middletown shall have \$1,000 for the most needed public improvement at the time of his death and that \$1,000 shall be distributed in sums not over \$50 each to the worthy poor of Frederick county, to be distributed by his executor. The will was made August 25, 1909, and was witnessed by I. N. Loy and John S. Newman.

### Wife and Sisters Beneficiaries.

There is a codicil, dated November 15, 1911, and witnessed by Walter L. Rensberg and Albert M. Coblentz by which almost the whole will is changed, and in which the public bequests above mentioned are provided. His estate is left to his wife and to his two sisters.

What the estate will amount to is a matter of conjecture. Mr. Shafer had invested in a number of enterprises and his estate is widely scattered, and until the whole is gathered, any estimate as to the amount would probably go wide of the mark.

In his will he directs that should he die in a section where it was convenient to have his body cremated that this be done, and that he desired his ashes buried in the Christ's Reformed Cemetery, Middletown. The will also says "I direct that a monument be erected over my grave on which shall be inscribed only my name, date of my birth, the date of my death and the following:

\*Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie;  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.  
This be the verse you grave for me;  
Here he lies where he longed to be  
Home is the sailor, home from the  
sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.  
R. L. S."

### Legacy For Church.

The officers of the Christ's Reformed Church Cemetery, after the death of the beneficiaries of the estate are to receive \$2,000, yielding \$100 annually, and this money is to be used

in keeping the grave of the testator in proper order for all time. If possible, he directs that his father's lot be kept in condition also out of this fund.

In the codicil, Mr. Shafer says: "I specifically direct that my body be incinerated at the crematory most conveniently located to the place where I cross the Great Divide."

He also states he wants W. G. Boileau, of Middletown, to erect the monument to his memory. He then directs how his estate shall be divided among his relatives, in trust, and says that after these trusts cease, there shall be erected in Christ's Reformed Church, Middletown, three memorial windows at a cost of \$500 each to the memory of his father, Peter W. Shafer, his mother, Anne L. Shafer and his aunt, Malinda C. Shafer.

### \$1,000 For Middletown.

Again the codicil reads: "For the most needed public improvement in Middletown, or in lieu thereof, a gift of my water bonds to the municipality for cancellation, the latter to operate as a gift to all people, and would find reflection in the taxbills of every taxpayer. The latter, I would prefer, but if any carping critic manifests a disposition not to want a gift from me, then carry out the first suggestion of a public improvement."

Another paragraph says: "To my executor \$1,000, having full confidence in him, to be distributed by him in sums of not over \$50 each to the worthy poor of Frederick county."

The benevolent bequests are not to be given until the trusts under the will cease. Emory L. Coblentz is named as the executor of the will.

## Later Year Graduates

Even though "high school" only consisted of grades 7,8, and 9, there were very few high school graduates back then. Boys often had to drop out to help work the farm or apprentice at a trade. Girls often had to return home to help with housekeeping and raising children or were married. In 1892 MHS had 6 graduates, Alvey Beachley, Daniel Remsburg, Elmer Coblentz, Hattie Remsburg, Hattie Getzendanner and Rose Coblentz. Doug Martin was able to find a copy of the Commencement Program for the class of 1892.

PROGRAMME

SECOND ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

OF THE

Middletown High School,

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 1892,

8 o'clock, P. M.,

Reformed Church, Middletown, Md.

PROGRAMME

Processional: ..... "March of the Molars," ..... Whitesides  
Prayer.....  
Original Oration: "History, the Picture Gallery of Past Ages." .....  
ALVEY L. BEACHLEY. ← Red arrow  
Essay: ..... "Trans Alpes, Italia Vergit." .....  
Miss HATTIE E. REMSBURG.  
Vocal Trio: ..... "O! Restless Sea." ..... White  
Original Oration: ..... "The Nineteenth Century, the best of all the Centuries." .....  
DANIEL E. REMSBURG  
Essay: ..... "Fields of Usefulness Open to Women." .....  
Miss HATTIE M. GETZENDANNER.  
Instrumental Solo: ..... "Priest's March." ..... Mendelssohn  
Miss H. SHAFER.  
Original Oration: ..... "Per Aspera ad. Astra." .....  
ELMER L. COBLENTZ.  
Essay: ..... "Beauties of Nature." .....  
Miss ROSE M. COBLENTZ.  
Vocal Solo: ..... "Song of the Nightingale." ..... Zeller  
Miss E. BEATTY.  
Address.....  
E. L. BOBLITZ, Supt. of Public Schools Frederick Co.  
Address.....  
Rev. T. F. HOPFMEIER.  
Instrumental Solo: ..... "Fantasie Facile." ..... Dorn  
M. S. REMSBURG.  
Baccalaureate Address, with Presentation of Diplomas.....  
Prof. E. B. PRETTYMAN, State Supt. of Public Schools.

==CLASS SONG OF 1892.==

Old Father Time, for ages through,  
Thy wings have cleft the ether blue;  
But hast thou felt the weight of years,  
Or heard the music of the spheres?

Thy flight hath been both free and far,  
From this green earth to glowing star;  
And for thy journeyings to and fro,  
Say, who can write them, who doth know?

What storms have swept across thy path,  
What powers of darkness poured their wrath  
Upon thy white uncovered head,  
As through the heavens thou hast sped?

And yet we would thy pardon ask  
For many an ill-done, slighted task,  
Forgive the days we've spent in vain,  
And may we ne'er do so again.

Come, tarry now with us, we pray  
Take to thyself a holiday,  
And then the class of ninety-two  
Will every honor give to you!

We ask this favor in the name  
Of Alma Mater, young in fame,  
Whose steps we hope, both good and true,  
May now go hand in hand with you.

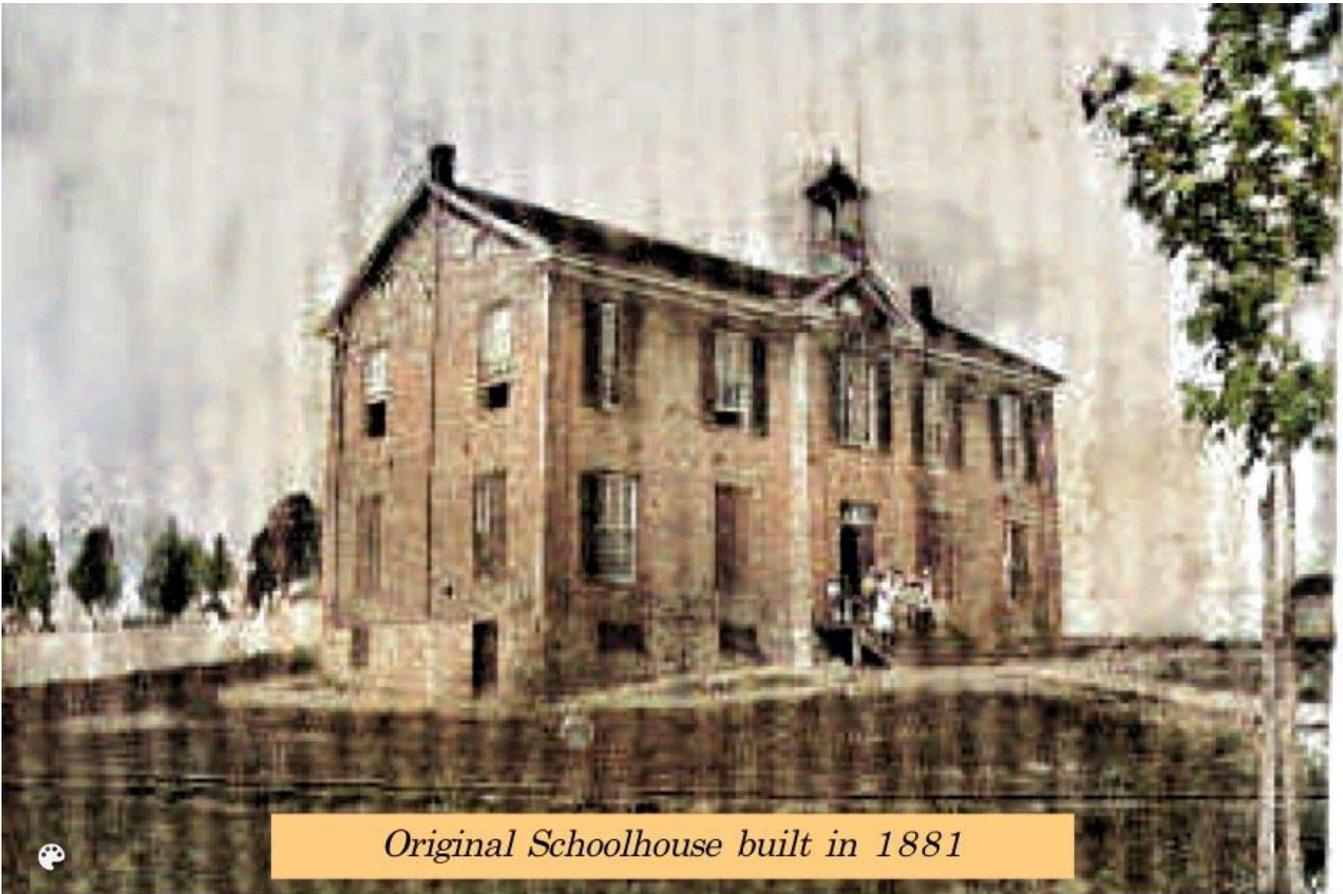
Benediction.....

In 1895 there were again only two graduates. Not until the high school moved its new quarters in the old Catholic Church building, on East Main street, was there any appreciable increase in the number of graduates (The Valley Register, June 8, 1979).

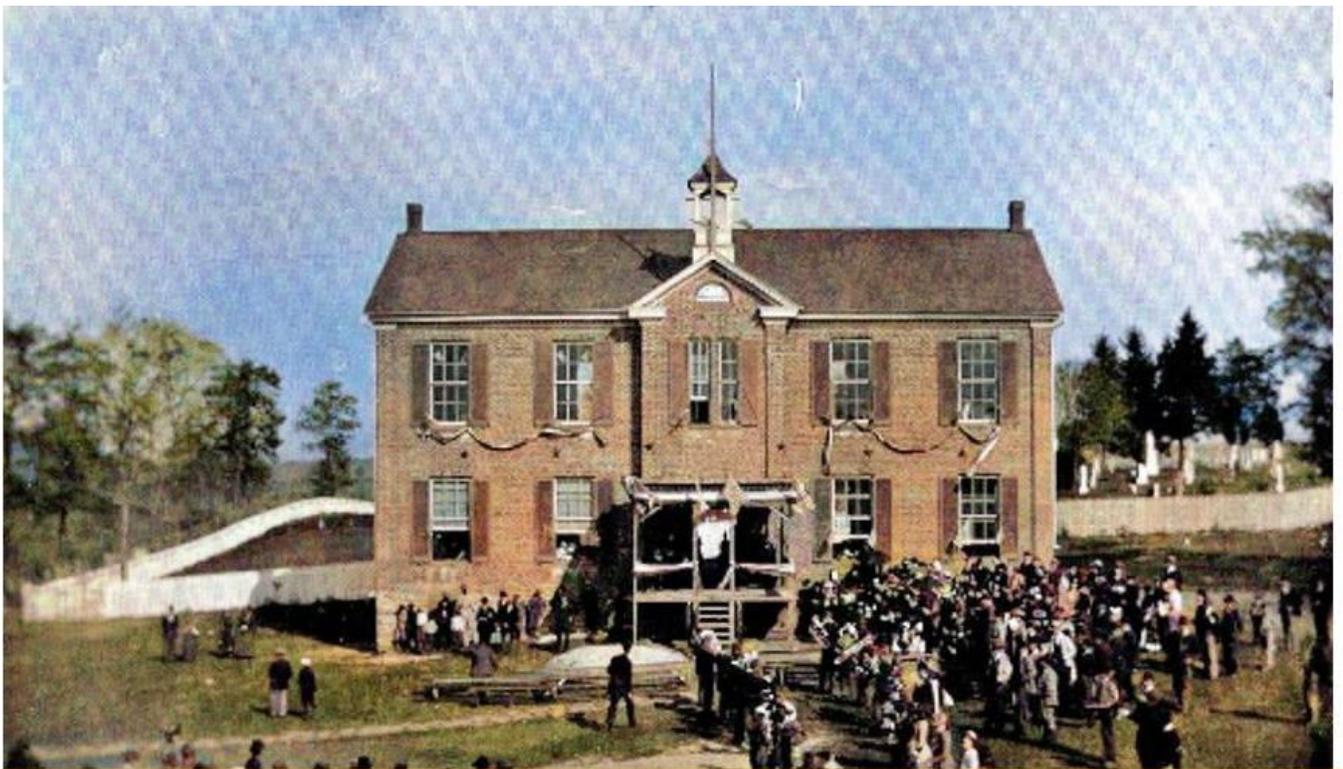
Further evidence of MHS being the first public high school in Frederick County comes from an excerpt from the May 22, 2017 edition of *Frederick Magazine*, "...dating as far back as the school's founding in 1891, when the "Male High School" opened to give boys the opportunity to attend high school in Frederick." Note this is the year that Shafer and Bowlus graduated from Middletown High School.

There remains controversy as to where high school sessions were first conducted as some records point to a house on East Main Street, some to "the Academy" and others to the old church building. However, evidence from multiple sources points to the 1881 schoolhouse pictured below as the **first public school building to teach high school classes in 1888**.

Schoolhouse Building – Built 1881 – First High School Classes Held in 1888



*Original Schoolhouse built in 1881*



*Corner of North Jefferson and West Green Street  
Dedication of Old Schoolhouse--December 1881--Destroyed by fire on October 14, 1907*

### **In 1891 Middletown High School classes moved to the Grange Hall**

So the first high school classes were held in the building on the corner of Jefferson and Green Streets. But this proved to be an inadequate structure of only four rooms in which nine grades of pupils were receiving instruction. So, in 1891 the three high school grades were moved to the Grange Hall, housed within a commercial/residential building on what is now Church Street. And this is followed by the excellent old photo showing the Grange Hall.

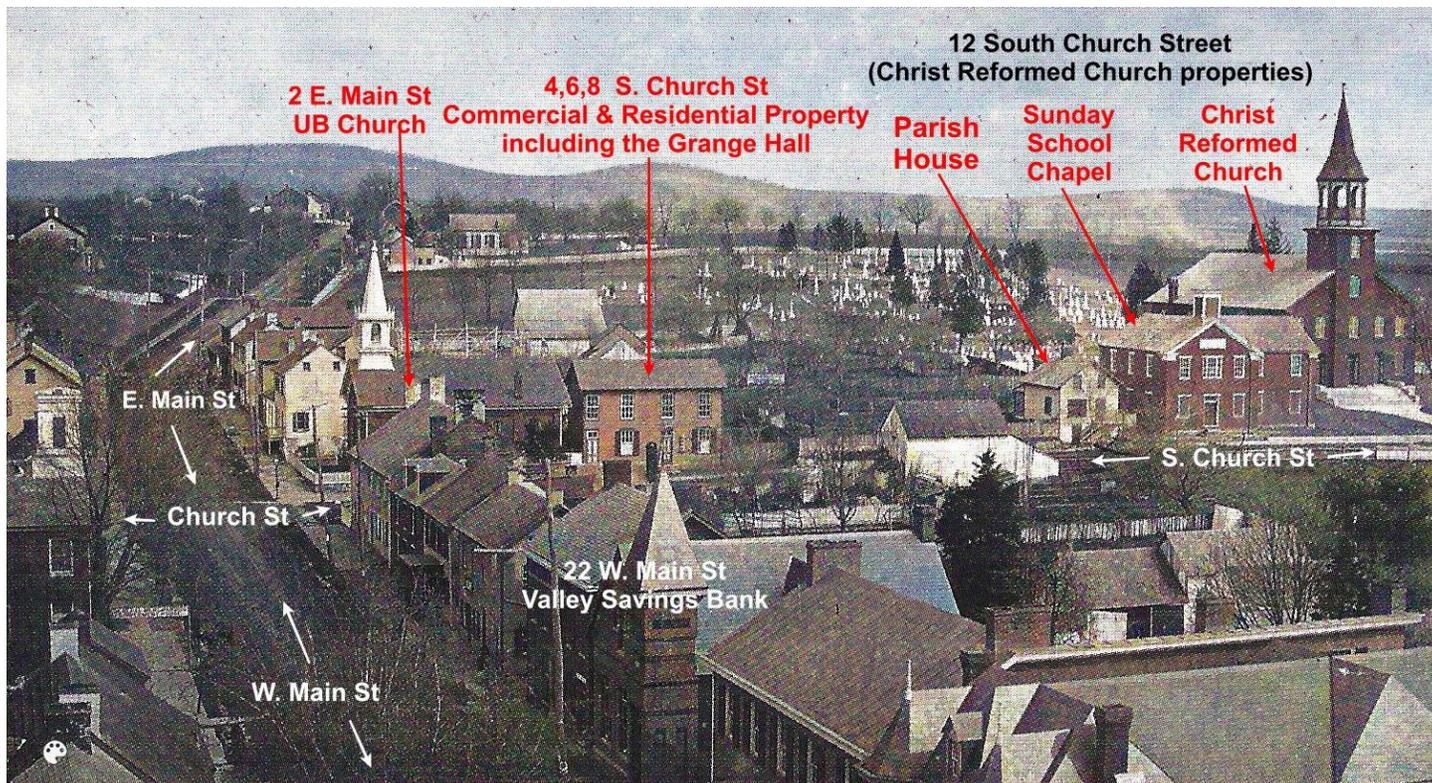


Photo is from the early 1900's, but does show the "Grange Hall" location.

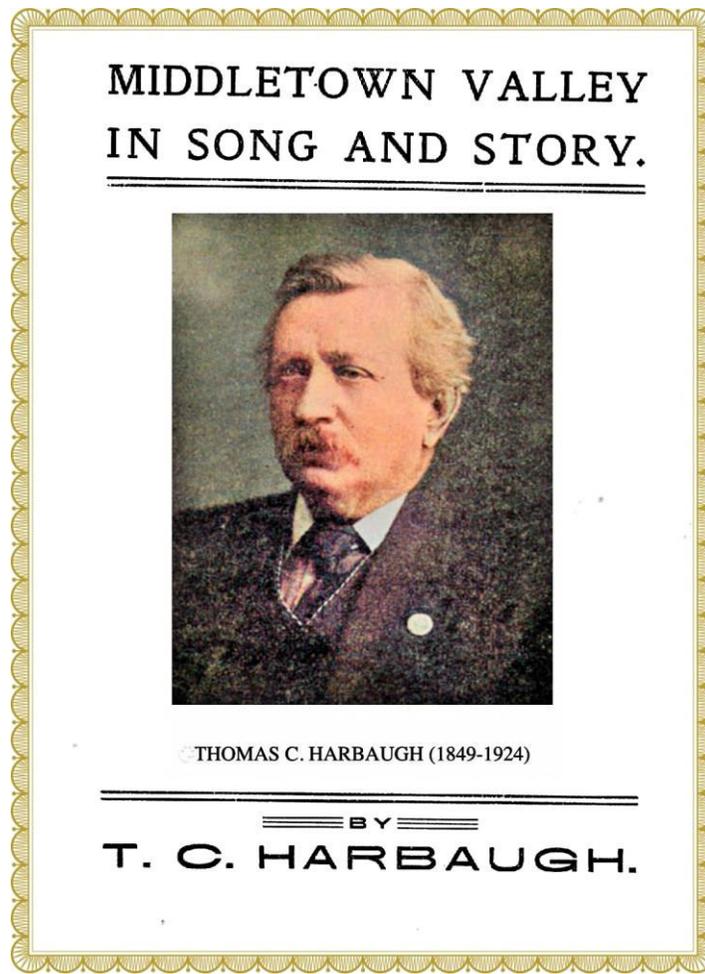
### **In 1894 Middletown High School classes moved to the Catholic Church Building**

A Catholic Church was established in Middletown in 1868 in a log building on 30 East Main Street, a vacant lot just east of the Reformed Cemetery. Attendance declined over the years and it was decided to sell the building to the Frederick County Board of Education. On December 22, 1893 the Frederick County Board of Education purchased the Middletown Catholic Church for \$800 to become the new high school. In September 1894, the high school moved from its location in the Grange Hall and opened in the newly fitted out Catholic Church building with Mr. C.E. Dryden, principal. Middletown high school occupied this building between 1894 and 1907. The church was later sold and remodeled into a residence. The grammar school remained in the original schoolhouse until it was destroyed by fire on October 14, 1907 (Rhoderick, George C., Jr., 1989, pp. 300-301).

According to the 1988 Chestnut Burr yearbook, this may have been the early Catholic Church that housed high school classes, but it is not certain and the structure has been torn down.



This house on 30 East Main Street stands where the Catholic Church was located 1894-1907.



**T. C. Harbaugh (Thomas Chalmers Harbough)**  
**Author of "MIDDLETOWN VALLEY IN SONG AND STORY"**

From Wikipedia:

He was born on January 13, 1849 in [Middletown, Maryland](#). When he was two years old, his family moved to Casstown, Ohio, where he was educated in local schools. He thereafter he worked for his father, a house painter. In 1867 began to devote his time to writing, mainly of short stories and serials for [dime novels](#). He was one of the authors of the [Nick Carter](#) Detective Stories. He wrote from 300 to 600 thrillers, at the rate of one a week, with pen; later, in the days of the typewriter, he sometimes bettered his speed. He died penniless in the Miami County, Ohio Poor House, Ohio on October 28, 1924.

A couple good links:

[https://www.ulib.niu.edu/badndp/harbaugh\\_thomas.html](https://www.ulib.niu.edu/badndp/harbaugh_thomas.html)

[https://books.google.com/books?id=vzleAAAAMAAJ&pg=PP11&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=vzleAAAAMAAJ&pg=PP11&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Here is a poem published in 1910 by T.C. Harbaugh fondly remembering the first schoolhouse which burned down in 1907.

MIDDLETOWN IN SONG AND STORY

THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

The other eve I climbed a hill  
With thoughtful steps and slow,  
A hill whose summit oft I sought  
In childhood's "long ago."  
And many a sweet thought came to me  
As all alone I stood,  
Where once the old brick schoolhouse rose  
Close by the wavy wood.

It seemed to me that round me swarmed  
Where thick the shadows lay,  
The forms of schoolmates loved and dear  
And faces passed away—  
That there I heard, as oft of yore,  
The voice of Bill or Joe,  
And felt the touch of cherished hands,  
That mouldered long ago.

I heard the bell the masters rang,  
(They sleep beneath the sod,  
Their only aim in life to serve  
Their country and their God),  
And then I thought how few remain  
Of Valley belles and beaux  
Who climbed with me that little hill  
So many many years ago.

Not one of all the playmates old  
Seemed absent while I stood  
Where once we swung our sweethearts in  
The shadow of the wood,  
And while I tarried on the ground  
Their footsteps to and fro  
Kept time to loved and holy thoughts  
Of life's sweet long ago.

MIDDLETOWN IN SONG AND STORY

I know that some are far away,  
I know that some are dead,  
The footsteps of the living cross  
The paths we daily tread;  
But ah, the sweetest thoughts that came  
To me that sacred hour,  
Were of the ones who rest beneath  
The leaf, the bud, the flow'r.

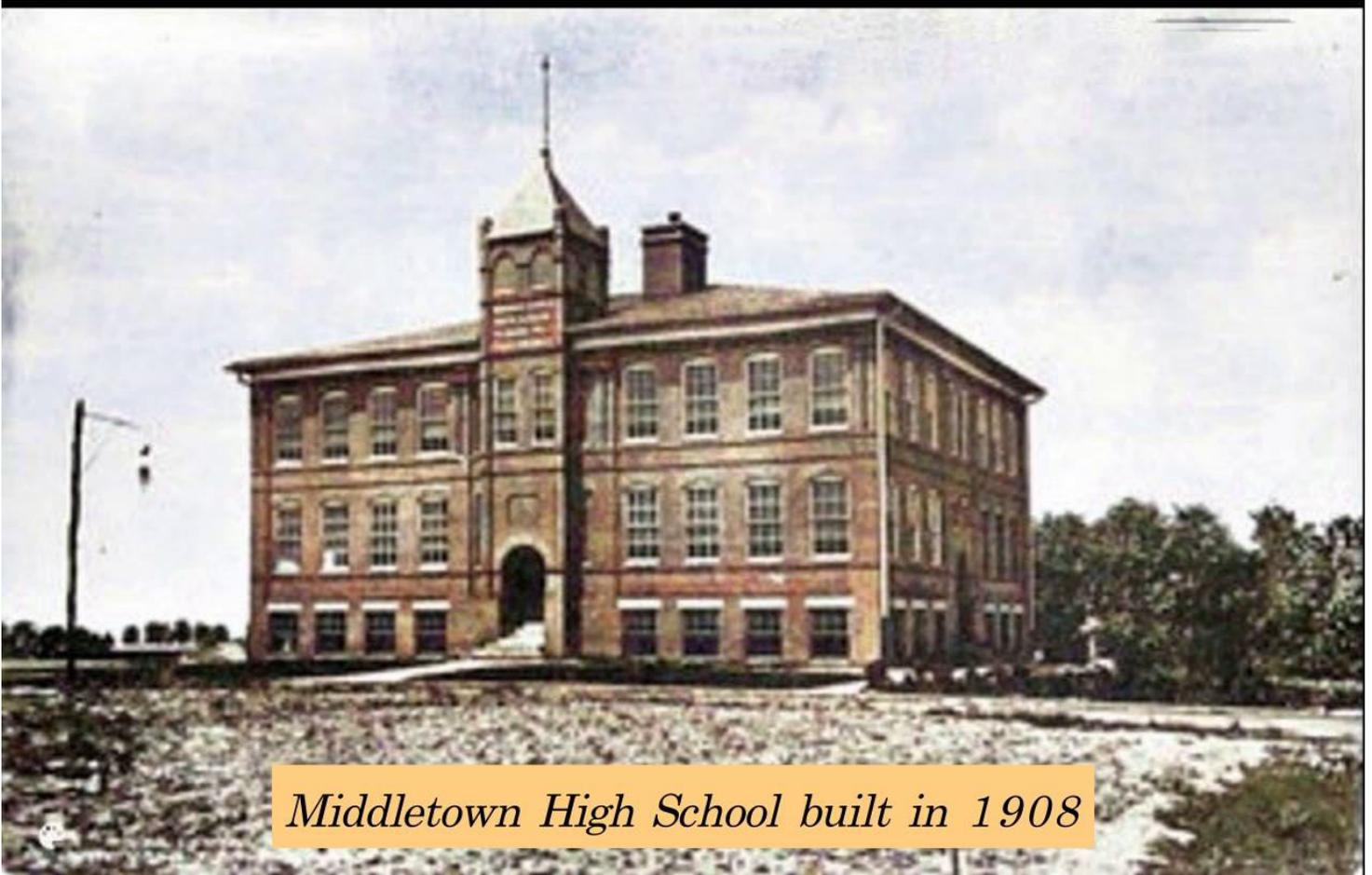
The old schoolhouse has been replaced  
By one of statelier view,  
The playground of today is not  
The playground that we knew;  
The children who with shout and song,  
Run daily to and fro,  
Look like the boys and girls who were  
Our schoolmates long ago.

Before I left the holy spot,  
The dearest one to me,  
Though I have seen the richest lands  
That lie 'twixt sea and sea,  
I asked for it the blessings sweet  
Of those above who know  
What memories often cluster round  
The scenes of long ago.

I thought that footsteps followed me  
That evening until  
I passed again the village gates  
That ope below the hill,  
But often in the hours to come  
To me my thoughts, I know,  
Will wander to the old playground  
I loved so long ago.

## Middletown High School Moves to 103 Prospect Street

In 1908 a new state-of-the-art public high school was built on 103 Prospect Street. MHS occupied this building, and its subsequent expansion, between 1908 and 1952.



*Middletown High School built in 1908*

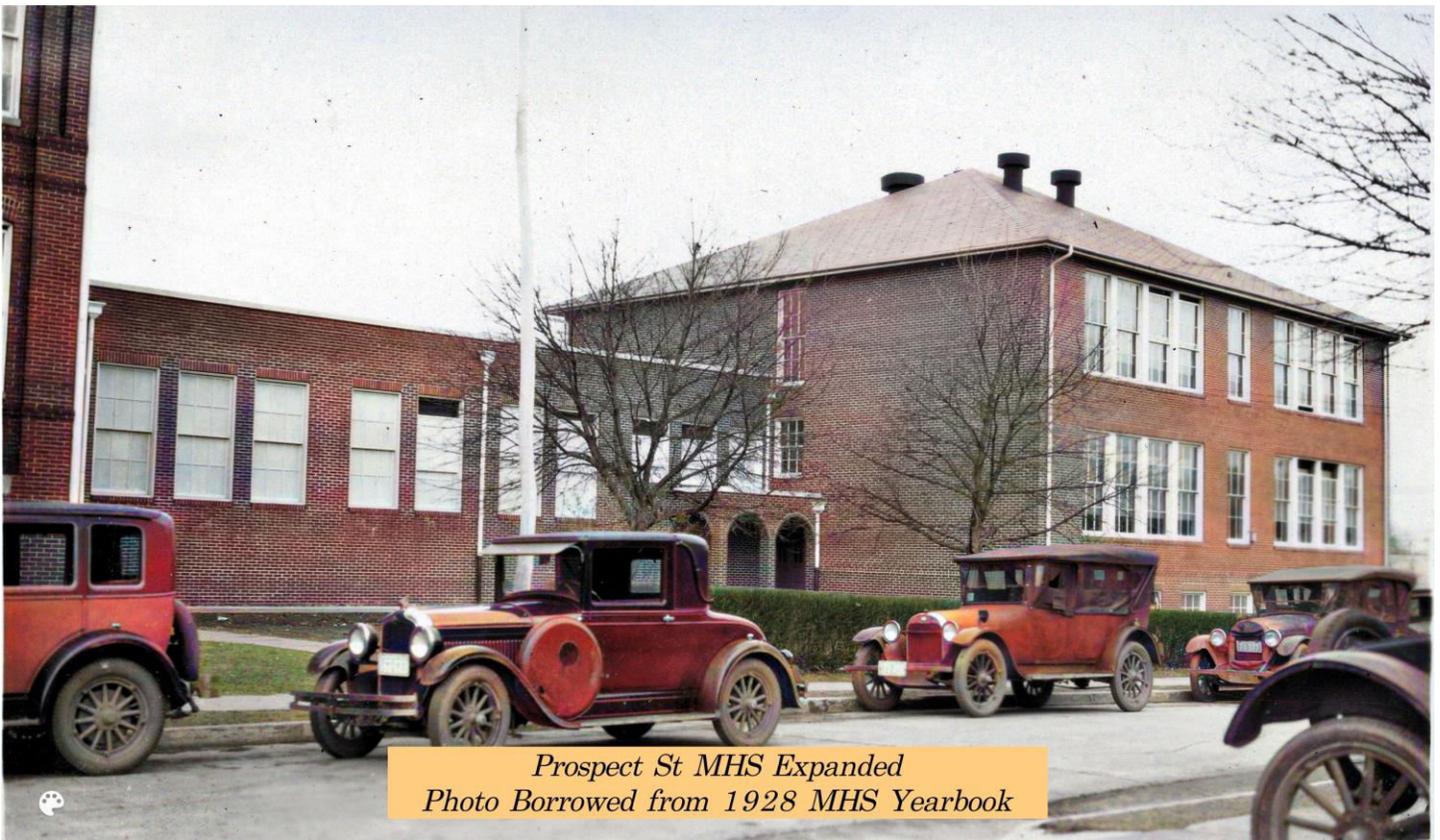
**Oldest photo we have found.**

After World War I and the Spanish Flu, MHS roared into the 20's. Middletown's population was growing. Along with the addition of the 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Grades in September 1925 for all of Frederick County, it was time to expand the facilities to accommodate the increase in student numbers. As we can see from the first ever MHS Chestnut Burr Yearbook of 1928, a new "annex" was built onto the side of the original building, housing the newest high school students while the older structure started housing the grammar school students. Just in time before the stock market crash and Great Depression.



*103 Prospect Street MHS School House built in 1908  
Photo borrowed from 1928 MHS Yearbook*

**Original Main Building.**

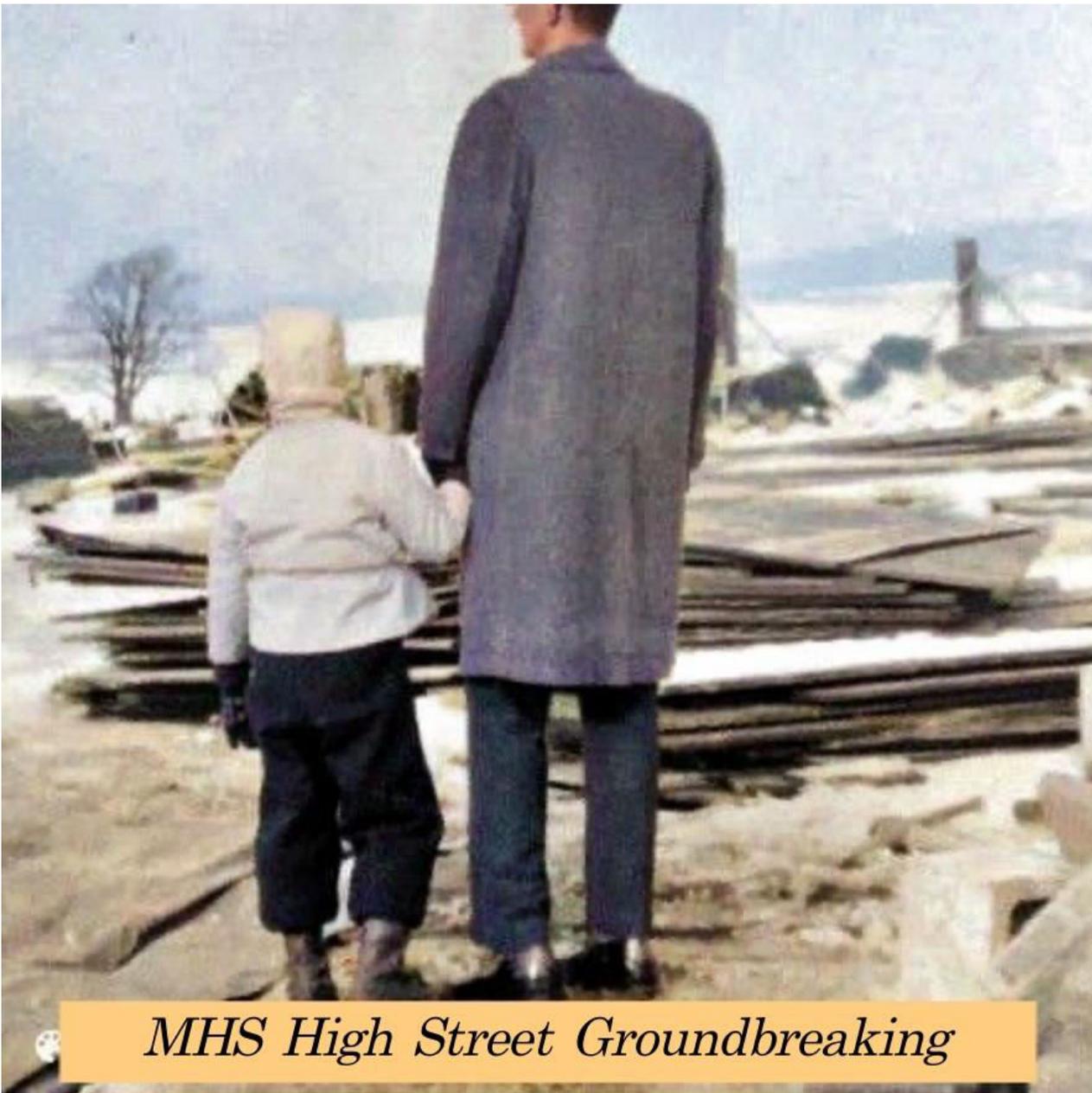


*Prospect St MHS Expanded  
Photo Borrowed from 1928 MHS Yearbook*

## Middletown High School Moves to New Building in 1952

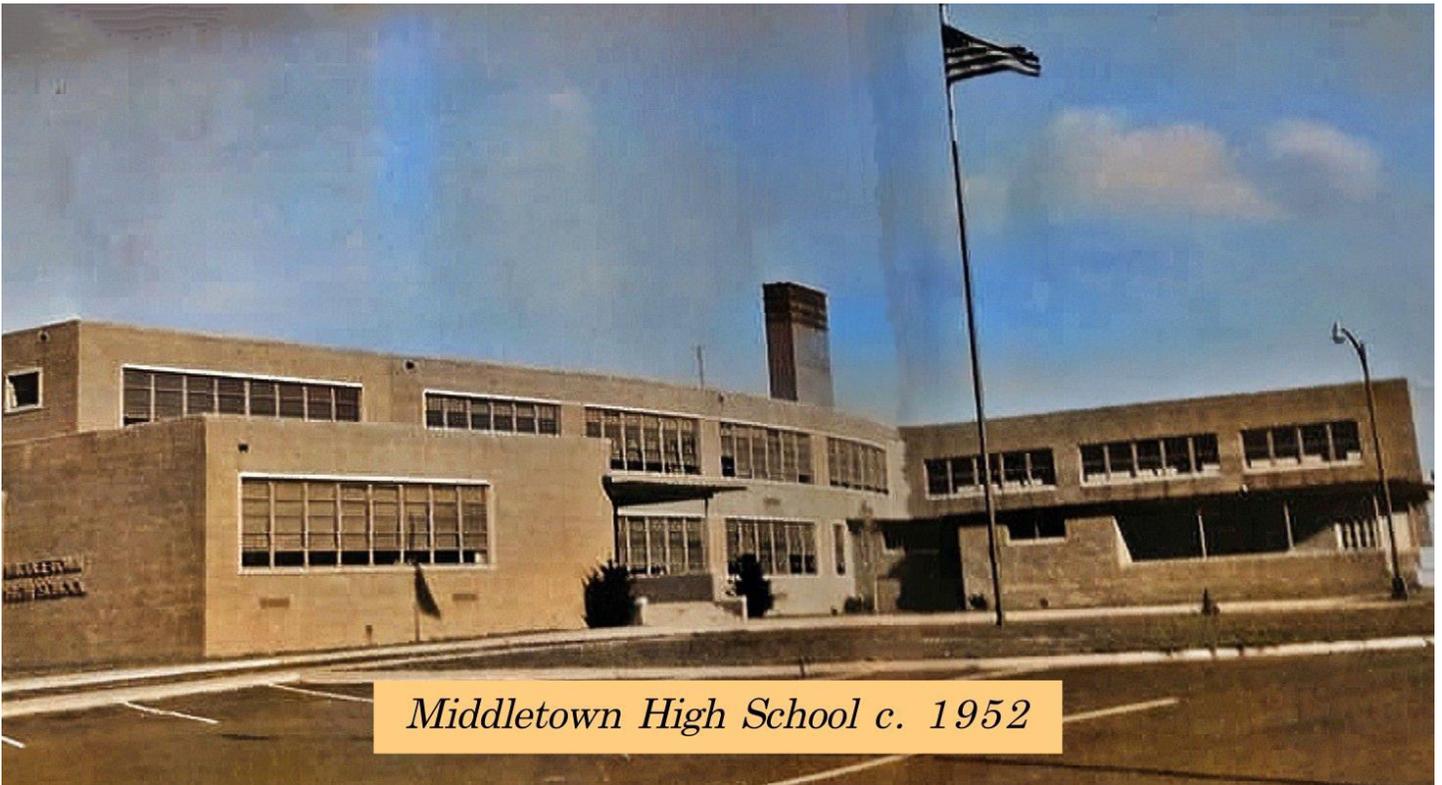
After WWII, the town's population was again on the rise, student enrollment increased, and it again became necessary to construct a new high school. It was built on High Street (now Martha Mason Drive) off East Main Street. (This building is now the current Middletown Middle School) The building was started in 1950 according to the cornerstone, and according to the 1952 Chestnut Burr Yearbook. The addition of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 1950 also gave impetus for yet a new location and facilities. A huge plot of acreage was acquired as we'll see, the city planners were on the ball! Students moved into the new building on February 11, 1952. This would eventually be used to house grades 7-12 until 1974.

Side Note: The school on 103 Prospect St. was then used as an Elementary School, School Board administration building Area 11 office, a preschool, and later sold to become part of the St. Thomas More Academy.



*MHS High Street Groundbreaking*

Doug Martin, MHS Class of '64 (4 years old) and his father, Cecil observe the groundbreaking.



*Middletown High School c. 1952*

The original building opened to students in February, 1952.

**MHS “Big Bird” Grows a Junior High Wing**

It didn’t take long for growing enrollment to necessitate expansion of the school on High Street. In 1956 groundbreaking for a new “junior high wing” occurred. It was to contain 13 classrooms to house the commercial, science, art and core classes. According to Steve Nikirk, Memorial Hall on 4 East Main Street was used as classroom space as the Junior High School wing was added to the High School.



*Memorial Hall - North Front*

The new wing of the MHS on High Street was completed and occupied in 1957. This photo from 1956 Chestnut Burr yearbook shows beginning excavation for new wing.



This photo from the 1957 Chestnut Burr yearbook shows the entrance to the new wing.

The new wing was completed and occupied in 1957. In the ariel view photo (borrowed from the 1966 MHS Yearbook), the L-shaped annex on the left of the original building is the new wing.



### Location, Location, Location

It can be seen here that the city planners had the foresight to acquire a large parcel of land with visions for much future growth for Middletown educational facilities!

With Middletown and its surrounding towns growing like expected, the next steps in the city planners' vision were launched.



## In 1974 Middletown High School Moves to its Current Location

In 1974 a new, state-of-the-art high school was opened on Schoolhouse Drive off E. Main Street just west of what became the Middletown Middle School. A new Elementary School was also built west of the Middle School. Additions were built in the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999.



**Middletown High School 1952-74 is now Middletown Middle School**

# Middletown Middle

Frederick County Public Schools, Maryland



Photo from Middletown High School Website. <https://education.fcps.org/mhs/>



# Middletown High

Frederick County Public Schools, Maryland



*Middletown High School - Built 1974*



*Middletown High School c. 1974*



*Middletown High School c. 1974*



*We've Come a Long Way!!!*

## Wrapping Up

So that is where we are today. Having established the very first public high school in Frederick County in 1888 and a graduating class of two in 1891 to our current MHS building and graduating classes numbering around 300 as of 2021 and a graduation rate exceeding 98%. MHS is consistently rated as one of the best public high schools by U.S. News & World Report. Middletown High School lives up to its motto and has demonstrably established, "A tradition of excellence, knowledge, creativity, strength and leadership."

Some final tidbits, according to Jerry Donald, MHS teacher, it was in 1956 that "Knights" was chosen as the name for the MHS boys' basketball team, and the name "Valleyettes" for the girls' team. The class of 1951 was the first to adopt "**standard** class rings." The Chestnut Burr was first published in 1928, handwritten with photos. Until 1950 there was only one bound copy of the Chestnut Burr. Chestnut Burr is also the name of the yearbook for Kent State University in Ohio.

Grateful acknowledgements to Charlie Bach and Doug Martin for their assistance. They reproduced yearbooks and Valley Register pages, searched Ancestry.com, interviewed people and posted our findings on their Growing Up in Middletown Facebook page. This was a truly a collaborative effort. Many others offered important information and leads, notably Steve Nikirk, Larry Bussard, Middletown Burgess John Miller and others who offered helpful comments and insights posted on the *Growing Up in Middletown* Facebook page. Additional information continues to be posted on Facebook.

To Lindsey Weaver, Middletown Middle School Counselor for running outside in the cold to locate the cornerstone on the building and for pointing me to others for help.

To Jerry Donald, Middletown High School teacher, for his helpful information.

And to Devra Boesch, President of the Middletown Valley Historical Society.

This narrative was compiled by Dr. Martin H. Ritchie who accepts responsibility for any and all errors. Martin is a proud 1969 graduate of Middletown High School. Received his B.A., M.Ed. and Ed.D. from the University of Virginia. Worked as a school counselor and counselor educator in Virginia, University of Queensland, Australia, Ohio University, and the University of Toledo before retiring and moving to Naples, Florida. 4 April, 2021.

Again, it is our hope that you will not only find this interesting but will be able to make comments and add/or correct some of the information. Enjoy!

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