

Subject: Harvey History FINAL (Gazette Newspaper-Rose's column 11-20-09)

HEADLINE: Old school property bears important history

THE PROPERTY ON which the old Harvey High School stands in Painesville has significant history that deserves proper public recognition.

While the first attempts at educating Painesville children began with 12 students in Abraham Tappan's pioneer log cabin near the Grand River at the Painesville Flats, the first truly organized endeavors began on the Washington Street property of the old Harvey High School, soon to close forever.

It began in the 1820s with the Painesville Education Society's purchase of the property and establishment of the Painesville Academy, for students from Painesville and surrounding areas. The Academy flourished for 20 years. Then it went into decline, and the Society deeded the property and building to the town of Painesville.

The city formed the first formal school board to be organized in Lake County, and town fathers decided the citizens themselves should elect the board members, "to encourage partnership between the people and the board, and to foster a mutual sense of responsibility."

Knowing that a high school education was a luxury many students could not afford, the board's first action was to set a vote for a town-wide tax to support the school. The tax was wholeheartedly approved, allowing the town to re-open the Academy as a free public high school. Departmental education was established, with separation of grades and classes; and modern education had begun here.

The school was so successful that, in 1860, the old Academy building was demolished to make way for a larger, two-story brick building. Again the citizens had strongly supported the \$13,000 construction cost.

The town grew, and so did the student population. By the 1890s, a larger building was clearly needed, and again the people of Painesville said yes. Their unfaltering support seemed to represent the epitome of a strong school spirit, involving not only students but the community at large.

SCHOOL SPIRITS OF another kind---the occupants of the Washington Street Cemetery on the east portion of the property---posed a temporary block to expansion. This first formal cemetery in the city had seen its final burial in 1869, and the surnames of the many interred there are echoed today in family, street and place names still familiar to us and our history... Moodey, Avery, Seeley, King, Paine, Phelps, Tracy, Burroughs, Wood, Sterling, Searles, Peppon, Mathews, Babcock, Gray and many more.

In 1879, families of the interred were ordered to begin removal, most to be re-buried at Evergreen, Painesville's second cemetery. By this time, many deteriorated and broken markers had been removed and buried under the surface of each grave. This was perhaps why the body of Gen. Edward Paine (the city's namesake) and one of his relatives were accidentally left behind, for theirs were among the stones that lay out of sight beneath the surface of the graves.

Papers were later found in a South Street attic, bringing this crucial error to the attention of Painesville officials, and Paine's remains were removed and reburied at the triangle of land across from Lake Erie College, beneath a statue designed, built and donated by the Morley family. (The other Paine was re-buried at Evergreen).

When it opened at the turn of the century, the newer Painesville High School was expected to serve the district's needs for many years. But growth continued, and soon it was obvious a larger, more fully equipped high school would be necessary; the voters approved the \$300,000 cost to build and equip it.

Construction of that school began in 1922, formally opening for students in 1925. The older Painesville High School building was retained, serving as Champion Junior High until its demolition in 1952.

The new high school was considered one of the best equipped high schools in the region. Wisely, it was named "Thomas W. Harvey High School"---a worthy tribute to a man who meant so much to education in Ohio and was greatly loved by the people of Painesville.

THOMAS W. HARVEY was one of the best known of Ohio educators---one of four Ohioans considered to be the most influential in development of public schools in Ohio. (*The others being Wm. McGuffey of Miami, OH, famous for his reading textbooks; Platt Spencer of Geneva, OH, famous for the Spencerian writing system; and Joseph Ray of Cincinnati, OH, famous for his math books*).

Harvey himself authored text books, having found the text books of his time to be inadequate. His grammars and math books were especially respected and used for many years by educators throughout the U.S.

Raised in Lake County on a Concord Township farm at the south edge of Painesville, Thomas W. Harvey realized early that he was not suited for farming. At age 15, he applied for work at the Painesville Republican, later to be known as the Telegraph, where he learned the printing trade. For a brief time he was its editor.

He then earned a teaching certificate, taught school and continued to further his own education. In 1849 he founded Geauga High School in Chardon, and in 1851 he became Superintendent of Massillon Schools. In 1865, he returned to his beloved Painesville to serve as Superintendent of its schools until 1871, when he was appointed by the Ohio Governor as State Commissioner of Schools, a position he held until 1877.

In 1879, he returned again to Painesville, serving until his death in 1892, as a trustee for Lake Erie Female Seminary (now Lake Erie College). During this period he founded the North East Ohio Teachers Association (NEOTA) which still exists, and continued to campaign for increased appropriations for state and local schools.

Harvey truly felt at home in Painesville. When he was offered the leadership position for the Columbus Schools, and also the Cleveland Schools, he turned both offers down, stating publicly that Painesville was "more suitable to my own inclinations than any other."

His home still stands at the southwest corner of Wood Street and Mentor Avenue. There he maintained a personal library of more than 6,000 books---considered to be the largest and finest personal library in Ohio at the time.

AFTER THANKSGIVING, the old Harvey High building will be vacant, with its students transferring to the new Harvey High School on Walnut Avenue. The old building will be demolished and the property sold.

Sad as that may seem for generations of the school's alumni who hold a strong affection for that building, I accept and respect the practical reasons behind the decision. But I do believe there

should be a move by school and city officials to seek historic designation of the property itself, with installation of a historic designation street-sign there.

It was, after all, the site of Painesville's first formal cemetery; the site of the birth and development of its city schools; the site of the first formal school board to be organized in Lake County; and a site intimately connected with Thomas W. Harvey, who devoted his life to public education and influenced its course in Ohio.

If you agree, please lend your voice with mine on that behalf, to school and public officials.

(Our columnist Rose Moore---a Painesville native and a proud Harvey graduate, Class of 1958--- can be reached at 440-350-9818)

ATTACHED PHOTOS:

Credit for both: archival photos

Pic of dark old building

Cutline: Many older residents still remember this old building when it was Champion Junior High School. It was built and used as Painesville High School until the newer Harvey High was opened in 1925. In 1952, Champion was demolished.

Harvey High School building

Cutline: This postcard photo shows the Harvey High School building as it looked in 1925. Since that time, there have been large additions. The school will be demolished soon.