

*New Beginnings*

*Chestnut Hill Academy*  
*1851-2011*

*Clark Groome '60*



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## Introduction

An institutional history should not only examine what happened during the period being explored but also put those events into a larger context.

While much of what we have to tell is based on historical documents and personal interviews, some of the history remains clouded. That's due to the lack of hard information about some times during the school's century and a half of life. The period between 1861, when the school was first incorporated, and 1895, when it was rechartered, are the toughest to pin down. What little evidence we have points to certain possibilities, but often we will have to make educated guesses or say, simply, we don't know.

This history will be, for the most part, in chronological order. We'll stop along the way to examine the historic Wissahickon Inn and all the other buildings that make up the campus. Another chapter will explore the school's athletics, activities and arts.

It's an exciting story, one that involves some struggles and many more successes. The institution that is CHA is an educational community: a combination of buildings, people, and ideas. The overriding idea is the commitment to give boys the knowledge and experience they need to thrive in the world after CHA and, it is hoped, to make it a better place than they found it.

A note about style:

At the beginning of the last century several English words were rendered differently than they are today. Among those relevant to CHA's history are headmaster, baseball, basketball and football. In the school's printed material from the early 1900s headmaster is written seven different ways: Head Master, Head-Master, Head-master, Headmaster, head master, head-master and headmaster. "Baseball" "basketball" and "football" are also seen in varying forms. Baseball, for example, is either base ball, baseball or baseball. For purposes of this history the modern form – i.e. "headmaster," "baseball," "basketball," and "football" – will be employed except in direct quotes, when the word will appear as it did in the source material.

And before we get going:

It's full disclosure time.

In early 1969 I was invited to join CHA's Alumni Association Executive Board. Shortly thereafter I chaired the committee formed to rewrite the association's by-laws, a need that grew out of the alumni's desire to become a more integral and contributing part of CHA's life.

It was then that the school's board of directors and Headmaster Nat Saltonstall were engaged in planning for the school's physical needs and the financial support required to meet them. As the resulting capital campaign, Accent on Advancement, wound down, the need for a fulltime director of development became apparent.

I was the lucky person hired, beginning the gig on December 1, 1971, and serving until June 30, 1978. Nat hired me during his last year as headmaster. Three months later, Gerrit Keator was chosen to be Nat's successor.

Chapter Six deals with the period when Nat and Gerrit were at the helm. I played a role in some of what happened, supported by the dedicated work of the faculty, some extraordinary volunteers, and a peerless administration.

As a participant in those years, I am delighted with their successes. As an historian, I have made every effort to be as objective as possible. That was not always easy, but editors and colleagues have helped by keeping me focused and by supplying other views about the period.

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Philadelphia  
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# Chapter 1

## Early beginnings

We'll start at the beginning as soon as we figure out just when that was.

Chestnut Hill Academy, the school that exists today, had its beginnings sometime in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. While 1861 is the date most often associated with the school's birth, and the date on the school seal, cases can be made for 1851 and 1895.

A school called Chestnut Hill Academy opened in 1851. Founded by the Rev. Roger Owen, a Presbyterian minister, and his brother Joshua, the school was designed, according to its 1855 catalogue, "to afford facilities for acquiring a thorough English, Classical, Mathematical and Scientific education, by which the pupil may be prepared to enter College, the Counting-Room, or one of the Liberal Professions – which, in our country, are open to all."

All the students boarded at the school, which was located at the southwest corner of what is now Germantown and Springfield avenues. Chestnut Hill, in those days, was a tiny community of fewer than 1,000 residents and viewed by the Owens as "peculiarly fitted for the location of a school, its elevated position being a guarantee for the healthfulness, and the orderly character of its citizens for its freedom from allurements to vice and immorality."

For some parents attending the school, college was then, as it is now, a goal. But, according to the catalogue, "Many parents prefer having their sons fitted *in the Academy* to enter the more *advanced classes* at College; and this, not because of any peculiar advantages of an intellectual nature, but simply because they do not wish to expose them, at an early age, to the many and dangerous temptations of a college life." This fear – the 1850s equivalent of the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll of a century later – was, apparently, a big selling point.

In 1855 Roger Owen left the school to his brother and returned to full-time ministry, something he had left due to an ailment called "minister's sore throat" that caused him difficulty in speaking and preaching. It was

that ailment that brought him to Chestnut Hill in the first place, coming for the healthful air for which it was then noted.

After Roger left there is no evidence that the school he founded continued. It was not until 1861 that Chestnut Hill Academy reappeared.

According to Ruth Parachini's invaluable *History of Chestnut Hill Academy*, written for the school's centennial in 1961, "As the community began to grow rapidly, some of the new Chestnut Hill families began to be concerned about the education of their children."

The result of that concern was a charter application for a school made by J. E. Mitchell, Richard Levick, William H. Trotter, Thomas Earp Jr., and M. Russell Thayer to the Commonwealth's legislature. That charter was granted on February 26, 1861 when Governor Andrew G. Curtin signed an act "to incorporate the Chestnut Hill Academy," inauspiciously less than two months before the Civil War began.

The trustees built, at the cost of \$1,550.10, a one-story stone schoolhouse on Rex Avenue. While there is limited evidence about the period from the school's founding until the late 1880s, Parachini reported that the first headmaster was "a Mr. Buckingham. He held the position for one year. Henry W. Scott was headmaster from 1863 until 1870 and was followed by Reginald H. Chase, who was head until about 1880."

During the late 1870s and 1880s Chestnut Hill Academy became what was then called an "infant school," a school for young children run by Miss Josephine Chamberlain.

In a letter from Edward Walter Clark to fellow trustee Francis D. Lewis written March 17, 1921, Clark reports, "The School started in 1861 in the School House on Rex Avenue, north of Germantown Avenue, which was used off and on until the fall of 1895 . . ."

The use of "off and on" indicates that the school's operation was not uninterrupted after the charter was granted in 1861. Just when the school was and wasn't functioning is not known, but the evidence suggests the toughest times were in the 1880s.



As CHA changed and struggled, the school tried to become more modern, an example of which was reflected in a board minute of June 11, 1889 – one of the earliest existing board minutes – that reported “The Pres[ident] agreed to investigate the question of the cost of introducing water in the Academy.” Prior to that time the school had borrowed water from its next-door neighbor.

In December, 1895, the board minutes report that “another boys’ school had been started at Chestnut Hill by a number of influential men and that they had purchased a property at 8030 Germantown Ave with a large building on it. . . . That all of our scholars and our teachers had left and gone to the new school. That the new school wanted a charter and were willing to unite with us under our old and valuable charter.”

In a seemingly contradictory minute of a meeting held one week later, “The Board proposed to buy the property at 8030 Germantown Ave from Charles W. Henry. He agreed to the terms proposed.”

Just whether this was the equivalent of a hostile takeover or simply a way for two interest groups – those associated with the existing institution and those desirous of the newly constituted school – to join forces for the common good is hard to tell. What is clear is that some of the people involved with the old school – Richard Levick, Howard Kneedler, and Edward H. Trotter – were actively looking for a new, larger facility for their school as early as 1889.

The likelihood is that the two competing institutions, both supported by people who knew each well and were almost assuredly friends, joined forces to establish a new institution that would bring the old school and its younger students into partnership with the new school.

According to the school’s *Quarter Century Review*, published in 1921 to celebrate the 25 years since the Academy was rechartered in 1895, “The Chestnut Hill Academy as it now exists began its life on September 22, 1895, with thirty-five boys, including two boarding pupils.”

The merger of the old and new schools took place August 7, 1895 when, again from the *Quarter Century Review*, the proposition to take charter of Chestnut Hill Academy was agreed to. The Board of Trustees of the new school was appointed on October 4, 1895.

According to the reestablished school's first catalogue, printed in 1896, "Chestnut Hill Academy was founded in the fall of 1895 by a group of gentlemen who believed two things: that Chestnut Hill should have a boy's school of the first rank, and that a school of this character could nowhere find a more beautiful location than at Chestnut Hill."

Chestnut Hill in 1895 was totally different than it was when the Owen brothers first set up their school 44 years before. Two rail lines served the community and led to much of the change. The Chestnut Hill Railroad (later the Reading and now SEPTA's Chestnut Hill East line) began service in 1854. The Philadelphia, Germantown and Chestnut Hill Railroad (later the Pennsylvania and now SEPTA's Chestnut Hill West) started running in 1884. Together they played a critical role as the community grew into not only a popular summer resort but also a thriving commuting community.

During this period of growth a number of local churches and other institutions were born. The most influential developer in Chestnut Hill was Henry Howard Houston who created a great deal of Chestnut Hill's western section.

During the 1880s he built, in addition to dozens of houses, the Philadelphia Cricket Club and the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in what was then known as the Wissahickon Heights section of Philadelphia.

He also built the Wissahickon Inn on land previously occupied by the Park House, an inn that was destroyed by fire in 1877. The new inn opened to rave reviews on May 30, 1884. It was an instant success and flourished for the next dozen years before the ease of travel to more distant destinations began to diminish its popularity as a resort. In what can only be viewed as serendipitous timing, the decline of the Inn's popularity and the growth of the newly revitalized Chestnut Hill Academy occurred almost simultaneously.

The new school's first headmaster was Frederick Reed who resigned after only one year, to be replaced by Dr. C. Hanford Henderson, who also only lasted one year.

Henderson's headmastership was, apparently, quite controversial. According to a report he made to the board "several parents were dissatisfied with the radical methods introduced into the Academy, and more especially the substitution of Geometry for Arithmetic, and the supposed omission of Spelling and geography." Several on the board agreed with the parents and, shortly thereafter, Henderson resigned.

In his resignation letter he wrote, "I should be sorry to remain in the present building another year, for it is quite inadequate for our purposes. I should like to consider the Wissahickon Inn."

And that they did. After hiring Dr. James L. Patterson as Henderson's successor, the trustees worked out an agreement with the Wissahickon Inn to use its facilities during the school year. That arrangement began in 1898. The catalogue for the next school year, 1899-1900, noted, "This building is devoted exclusively to the use of the school."

As the school moved into the Inn and began to prosper under Dr. Patterson's leadership, most of the credit for the Academy's rebirth was given to Charles Wolcott Henry, in whose memory the library is named.

Henry died in 1903. That year's November 28 board minutes included a lengthy tribute, which included the following:

He was essentially the founder of the school. It had slumbered for more than a quarter of a century when, in 1895, he became interested in its welfare. He indicated to a few of his friends the necessity of its existence in this locality, warmly appealed for co-operation, re-organized its Board of Directors, and, under the stimulus of his purpose and energy it was soon established in a new and commodious home on Main Street (Germantown Avenue). But its growth was not permitted to languish. He actively urged the securing of larger accommodations. Every one was inspired by his earnestness and example. Others followed in cordial and efficient support of this beneficent project, but he was always in the vanguard, confident and encouraging.

When CHA moved into the Inn, the school's academic program in the Upper School (Forms I-VI) consisted of, according to the 1899-1900 catalogue, "two courses of study, the Classical and the Scientific. The

courses of study are intended to provide the elements of a liberal training, and secondarily to prepare boys for any American college or scientific school, or for business.”

The Wissahickon Inn has remained at the school’s core for the past 11 decades.

## Chapter 2

### Wissahickon Inn anchors CHA's modern campus

For all the generations that have passed through Chestnut Hill Academy, and for all the changes that have taken place to the buildings and grounds, it is the Wissahickon Inn – that familiar and grand, three-storied, U-shaped Queen Anne building and its entrance, the Exchange - that remain constant.

Several people interviewed for this history have noted that while there have been significant changes to the physical plant over the years, anyone returning after a long time away would feel very much at home.

The returnee entering the building through the main door would still find the Exchange with its welcoming fireplace. The chapel remains down the hall to the right and the library to the left. It is those three elements that make the Wissahickon Inn so familiar. The school benefits from the Inn's history, one that was affirmed when it was named a National Historic Landmark in 1979.

Henry Howard Houston built the Wissahickon Inn in 1884 as an early part of his Wissahickon Heights development. A flourishing resort for many years, its popularity was in decline by the time Houston's son-in-law, Charles W. Henry, offered it to CHA in 1898, at first for the off-season winter months, and then finally year-round when the Inn ceased operations in 1900. The school's move to Willow Grove Avenue ended its off-again, on-again history.

With 250 bedrooms, the Inn supplied plenty of space for boarding students, mostly on the third floor. Other school elements – a library, a gymnasium and classrooms for science, for example – had to be created in areas designed for leisure and social interaction.

When the school moved to its present location, Edward Calvin Durfee, an English teacher and housemaster, wrote in the school's *Quarter Century Review* that, "the athletic facilities [included] the 'Old field,' which had been . . . recently used as the ring of the horse show." That field, upgraded for use as a playing field and surrounded by a track in 1903,

still serves as the varsity baseball field and is thought to be the oldest scholastic baseball field in the region.

The first major renovations to the main building were made in 1905 and 1906. The Inn's open-air swimming pool was enclosed and a gymnasium built next door in 1905. That same year the Inn's ballroom, which had served as an assembly hall, a gym, and at one point even the home for Headmaster James L. Patterson's Oldsmobile during the winter, was turned into the school chapel by lowering the floor five feet.

The next year the Inn's dining room became the school library. It was dedicated in Charles Wolcott Henry's memory to honor the man who, more than anyone, was responsible for the school's rejuvenation in 1895.

As the school moved into the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, CHA's physical plant required ongoing attention, mostly the standard maintenance needed by older buildings. One of the major changes was the removal, in the 1920s, of the wide porches that surrounded the entire facility. This brought more light to the classrooms and gave the school the look it has today. This removal may have caused the students sadness since those porches were used for roller-skating on rainy days.

Concerns about troubles with the heating plant, about better space for science, and also about the need for a building for the youngest students were ongoing. No action was taken, however, because of the stock market crash on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929. CHA, like individuals, institutions, and businesses everywhere, had to fight just to survive.

The first impact of the Great Depression was the diminution of the number of boarding students. Ruth Parachini reported in her centennial history that, "In 1933-1934 an extensive survey of the Academy and its purposes and problems was made with the aid and advice of Dr. E.D. Grizzell of the University of Pennsylvania. The final report of the survey committee . . . found that because of the depression, the enrollment of boarding students had been rapidly shrinking but that the expenses of running the boarding department had continued disastrously high. It was recommended that the boarding department be given up, that Chestnut Hill Academy become a college preparatory country day school for boys."

This major change in the academy's operations in 1934 eliminated the need for living quarters. The result was that the third floor, except for a few classrooms in the school's northwest wing, was closed. It would remain vacant for the next 65 years. It was, however, a destination of many adventurous students over the years. Their names and messages adorned the walls. Exploring the third floor became a rite of passage for generations of CHA boys.

From the time that CHA took over the Inn, the Houston family had been the owner of the buildings and the campus on which they rested. As the Great Depression continued into the late 1930s the Houston estate decided to turn the facilities over to the school. To that end, deeds to four buildings – the Inn, the former swimming pool, the gymnasium, and the recreation building located at the junction of Valley Green Road and Springfield Avenue – and 22 acres of land were transferred to the Academy in 1940. CHA was reincorporated under the Pennsylvania non-profit code. Until the transfer the Houstons were entitled to keep any profits the school earned although, Parachini reports, “there is no reason to believe any profits were ever made.”

The Great Depression's effects on the school were exacerbated on December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II in Europe and the Pacific. Students and faculty members enlisted in the armed services. Money was tight. The school decided that the only way it could survive was to eliminate the high school grades. Beginning in the fall of 1942 CHA's Upper School closed.

During that time, several other local schools folded. CHA did not. Under Headmaster Robert A. Kingsley's guidance during the war years, the school began to increase in enrollment, requiring the addition of a 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 1943. When World War II ended, the school continued to grow. By the early 1950s it was decided to reestablish the Upper School.

In the mid-1950s a group of ice skating devotees wanted to build a skating rink in Chestnut Hill. After much discussion, the location picked was at the southwest corner of Willow Grove Avenue and Cherokee Street on CHA land. Never anticipating the extent of the academy's future growth, CHA signed, in 1955, an agreement leasing that land for 99 years

at, believe it or not, just \$1 per year. The Wissahickon Skating Club opened a year later.

The old gym was named in 1952 in George Woodward's memory, who had died earlier that year. Woodward had married Gertrude Houston in 1895, and early on had joined his brother-in-law Charles W. Henry in enthusiastic support of the Academy. In 1955 the lower half of a new gymnasium was built. It provided additional space, primarily for locker rooms, that connected to the Woodward Gym.

The racquet sports were not forgotten during this period. Forrest G. Pearson '33 gave the school four all-weather tennis courts that were completed in 1956. In 1968 the school built four squash courts. Both of these sports had been played at the neighboring Philadelphia Cricket Club prior to the school building its own facilities.

Whether the USSR's launch of Sputnik on October 4, 1957 had any direct effect on the board's decision to build a science building is unclear. That launch and the consequent nationwide angst over American competence in science made the school's next major project – a new science building, which opened in 1959 – particularly relevant.

The originally planned campaign to raise the money became unnecessary when C. Mahlon Kline contributed more than \$200,000 in Smith Kline & French stock. He did it, according to his niece Jane Jordan Lea (later O'Neill), to honor his father Mahlon N. Kline, who had started his productive career as a science teacher. The building was named in Kline's honor.

Mrs. Lea, the parent of three CHA boys and an active and generous board member, was the moving force behind many CHA projects. She, her mother, and her uncle rank with the Houston/Henry/Woodward family as among the most generous in CHA history.

The next construction was the completion of the new gym's upper level with its new basketball court and grandstand. It was finished in time for the school's 1961 centennial celebration. The board's focus now turned to a much-needed building for its youngest boys.



Once again the Jordan/Kline/Lea family made it possible. Jane Lea convinced her mother, Mrs. T. Carrick Jordan, that she should not be outdone by her brother's gift of the science building. In a dramatic demonstration of sibling rivalry, Mrs. Jordan agreed to pay for the new building. The Jordan Primary Building opened in 1963 and houses Kindergarten, Pre-First 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

For most of CHA's history on Willow Grove Avenue, the school's headmaster lived in the apartment in the school's northeast wing. That changed in 1966 when the school was left the house at 416 West Springfield Avenue, across from the varsity football field. The bequest of Mrs. Charles B. Jennings, whose late husband was a member of CHA's class of 1901, Jennings House has served as home to every headmaster since Nat Saltonstall moved in late in the 1965-1966 school year.

The largest of the many changes to the Inn took place in the early 1970s when much of the building was renovated. The dining room moved to the old swimming pool. The old kitchen and dining room space in the western part of the first floor became home to an enlarged library and the math department.

An arcade that connected the main building to the new dining room commons was, at first, the subject of some derision. It gradually became such a part of the school that when it was torn down 25 years later many were sorry to see it go.

Included in the plans for the Accent on Advancement Campaign that raised the money for the 1970 renovations was a new performing arts center. When the campaign came up short, that component was postponed.

In the late 1930s, to address the ongoing need for performance space, CHA had floored over the swimming pool and built a stage to provide the school with an auditorium. This was never really adequate for the drama and music departments. The result was that many school plays and concerts were held in the Woodward Gym, which was less than ideal for a school whose indoor athletic facilities were already bursting at the seams.

In 1973, with the performing arts program desperately in need of dedicated space and the athletic department finding it increasingly

difficult for its space to serve both athletics and the performing arts, the idea of using the old recreation building as a performing arts center was proposed.

The Rec, as it is known, had originally been the stable for the Inn. Later it was used for indoor athletics and, in 1945, became the home of the Wissahickon Badminton Club. In 1953 the Rec's western half collapsed, due, it is thought, to the erosion of its foundation by an underground stream. While the school continued to play badminton there, its use by CHA was reduced to almost nothing. But it was the school's building and, after surveys and inspections, it was deemed to be just what was needed for the school's music and theater programs.

Since there was already some money given for a performing arts center and the cost of the renovations was relatively modest – less than \$200,000 – construction began in the summer of 1973. Students and faculty members contributed labor that was valued at slightly more than \$10,000. It opened January 17, 1974, with the Players production of *The Fantasticks*.

Four years after it opened, when long-time CHA faculty member Albert B. Conkey retired, the building was named in his honor. Conkey had, since 1942, been the center of the school and community music programs. At his acceptance of the honor he said with typical humor, “Conkey is now a Rec.”

During the period between the opening of the Rec as a performing arts center and the mid-1990s a lot of deferred maintenance issues were dealt with. No new construction was undertaken, however. During that time several of the fields, and the new gym, were dedicated to faculty members who made significant contributions to the school and specifically to its athletic programs.

At Homecoming in November 1973, the new (a/k/a the “large”) gym was dedicated to former headmaster Robert A. Kingsley. It was during his headmastership that the school reestablished its Upper School and thus needed the new locker room and basketball facilities that were built on his watch.

In the spring of 1974 the varsity baseball field was named for William E. Shuttleworth, a beloved and successful coach and master at the school from 1926 to 1938.

That fall, the field just west of Shuttleworth Field was named the Wales/Charles Field in honor of long-time masters, great coaches and great friends Percy A. Wales and Daniel W. Charles. Both died while still on the faculty, Wales in 1964 and Charles a decade later. They were great friends, superb teachers, adored by their students, and also great competitors, each always bragging that his team was superior to the other's. (Charles coached the 90-pound football and 11-year old baseball teams and Wales the 80 pounders and 10-year olds.) It was a rivalry that still brings smiles to the faces of many alumni who played for them.

In 1990, the varsity football field on St. Martin's Green was dedicated in honor of Charles H. Landreth '29. Mr. Landreth was one of the most dedicated of all CHA alumni and the father of two CHA graduates. He also served as the school's business manager from 1965 to 1978 and as alumni archivist until his retirement in 1989.

The last field to be dedicated was the varsity soccer field, which runs along Willow Grove Avenue between the tennis courts and Cherokee Street. Named in 2000 for James M. Talbot II, it honored a man who had taught at the school since 1966, had served as director of admissions and director of athletics, and coached the varsity soccer team to nine Inter-Academic League championships. In addition to the creation and dedication of Talbot Field, Landreth Field, the Pearson Tennis Courts, and the track were all completely renovated.

While the performing arts now had a home of their own, the fine arts were still squirreled away in the basement. In 2000 a new art wing was added to the western end of the main building in a location previously home to maintenance vehicles and trash bins. Part of the new wing is a gallery named in honor of Barbara Crawford who taught art at the school from 1942 until her retirement in 1990.

Art has always played an important part in the history of the school both in the classroom and on the walls. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the renowned Violet Oakley painted three biblical scenes that are

attached to the north wall of the Henry Library. They depict the boy David, the boy Solomon, and the boy Jesus.

A century later, thanks to the generosity of Henry McNeil '61, the well-known modern artist Sol LeWitt installed seven of his designs: five on the main hallway outside the math wing, one over the fireplace in the library annex, and one in the Crawford Gallery. The project included the preparation of the walls to be of museum quality.

In the Epiphany Chapel, five stained glass windows, designed by Willet Studios, have replaced the simpler windows installed when the chapel was created in 1905. Henry L. Willet '18 played a large part in the windows' designs that have as their central theme "Youth Searches for Understanding."

Installed over a period of 20 years beginning in 1966, the individual windows are entitled "Understanding Others," "Understanding Our Cultural Heritage," "Understanding Our Environment," "Understanding Self," and "Understanding God."

Other changes to the Inn itself were also made during the last 50 years. Among them were the establishment of the Balis Junior School Library, the creation of ramps and the installation of an elevator to make the school more handicap accessible, and the return of the roof to its original deep red color after years of being battleship gray.

During the mid-1960s, CHA and Springside School began holding coordinate classes. The two schools had been working together for many years. Since Springside moved its fifth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades onto its present campus in 1957, followed 12 years later by the younger grades, the two institutions have enjoyed an increasingly close relationship. The most significant part of that relationship is the Coordinate Program.

The schools share many facilities: Upper School classes are held on both campuses and the performing arts are presented either in the Conkey Center, the chapel, or one of the Springside auditoriums. Athletic facilities – most notably the tennis courts, the squash courts, and Springside's newly completed fitness center and rowing tank – are used by both schools.

The relationship was strengthened in 1976 when the Woodward family established the Springside/Chestnut Hill Foundation (called informally the SpringHill Foundation and later known as the CHASS Foundation) to benefit joint projects. The first initiative it funded was wiring both schools for computer access, enabling any student or faculty member on either campus able to communicate on the same system with others at either school.

In 2001 Springside needed to completely rebuild its Upper School. The project would take at least a full year during which the girls would need alternative housing. The original thought was to rent trailers but the cost and noise from the proximate construction made this less than an ideal solution.

Conversations between the two schools led to the decision to renovate CHA's long-dormant third floor. At first it would be the home for Springside's Upper School; thereafter would be used by CHA. The SpringHill Foundation paid the close-to-\$1 million cost.

One of the discoveries made by the workmen during the renovations was that the three wings of the Inn had been constructed separately. Each wing likely had a different builder. The three separate constructions joined together to make the Inn as we know it today. The use of support beams, some of them 20 feet in length, differs in all three wings. Turning the former hotel and dorm rooms into classrooms was a challenge but one that ultimately was aesthetically pleasing. The third floor would also become the only part of the main building to be fully air-conditioned.

Work on the third floor began as school ended in 2002 and was completed in time for the opening of school that September. Springside moved all its Upper School classes, its library and its science labs to CHA's third floor. Lunch and athletics still took place at their home campus.

After Springside's new Upper School opened in January, 2004, CHA decided that the best use for the new space would be as home for the Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades). Readying the space for CHA's boys took some additional renovation and cost about \$600,000.

As the school continued to grow in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dining room and the gymnasium facilities became increasingly cramped. To correct

that the dining/commons room was enlarged and the old Woodward Gym was razed to make way for a new gym, also named for the Woodwards. Both these facilities, which preserved the architectural style of their predecessors, opened in 2006. A year later the Commons was dedicated to the memory of Henry F. “Nick” Harris ’47, an alumnus, former parent, and former trustee who generously supported both CHA and Springside.

The most recent campus addition is The Rorer Center for Science and Technology. Advances in science and technology had rendered the tired old Kline building obsolete. The new building – named in honor of alumnus, former board chairman, and benefactor Edward C. “Ted” Rorer ’61 – provides the latest in classroom facilities in a “green” envelope designed to have a low impact on the environment. The center is the first area school building to be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The new facility opened to students in December 2008 and was dedicated in January 2009, was built between the Wissahickon Inn and the playground on St. Martin’s Green. Wind, photovoltaic cells and solar-thermal panels generate some of the power for the building. Other green features include the use of recycled construction material; grey water collection tanks that supply water for irrigation and for flushing the low-flow toilets; a rain garden designed to absorb the rainwater runoff from the building; and a porous parking lot designed to reduce runoff and limit area flooding.

An arboretum, consisting of trees native to the area, has been planted around the building. According to local historian David R. Contosta’s *A Philadelphia Family: The Houstons and Woodwards of Chestnut Hill*, “several years after the [Wissahickon Inn] was completed, Houston laid out an arboretum just east of the inn which he called St. Martin’s Green.” The new arboretum revives the Wissahickon Inn’s, which disappeared when the school began to grow and take over the land on which it existed. Part of St. Martin’s Green is now the varsity football field and part the school’s playground.

In terms of architecture, the large gym, the Kline Science Building, and the Jordan Primary Building were built more for utility than aesthetics. That approach changed during the period beginning in the 1970s when a growing appreciation of the Inn’s distinctive Queen Anne style led the

school to echo that style in new construction, not only in the attached art wing but also in the freestanding Rorer Center.

The alterations to the buildings and each new construction have all been undertaken for a single purpose: to improve the boys' educational experience. Headmaster Frank Steel '77 says that "what we have to remember every time we build a building is you don't build because it's jazzy to build, you build it because it allows you to do something for the students you're not otherwise able to do."

The boys have been well served by the campus changes. Despite the many improvements, the latest in design, and the most up-to date technology, anyone returning to the school's entrance will feel instantly back at the place he knew, no matter how long ago he last visited. It is the character of the familiar old building, where over a century of boys have studied and grown, that serves as an emblem of CHA's stability and strength.





## Chapter 3

### CHA in a changing world: 1901 to 1942

As Chestnut Hill Academy was settling in to its home in the Wissahickon Inn in the fall of 1901 Teddy Roosevelt had just assumed the presidency after William McKinley's assassination. The automobile hadn't yet replaced the horseless carriage. The Wright Brothers were still a couple of years from their flight at Kitty Hawk. Radio was two decades away. Jazz was not yet king. Baseball wouldn't play its first World Series until 1903.

Over the next four decades – ending in 1942 when another President Roosevelt, Franklin, was serving an unprecedented third term – CHA, and the world around it, changed dramatically. The country rode the roller coaster of events: World War I, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and another World War. Chestnut Hill Academy also experienced significant changes that helped shape the school of today.

Critical to any school's success is the person hired to lead it. In 1897 the trustees hired James Lawson Patterson. He came to the school from Union College where he chaired the math department after earlier teaching jobs at the Hill School and Lawrenceville. Patterson, a Lafayette College graduate with an honorary doctor of science degree from Princeton, led the school into the Wissahickon Inn the following year and through an impressive period of change and growth in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Patterson's educational program was "primarily to provide the elements of a liberal training, and secondarily to prepare boys for any American College or scientific school, or for business." There were two courses of study: Classical (English, Latin, Greek, six years of ancient history, five years of mathematics, and two years of modern languages) and Scientific (where Greek was omitted and additional work in natural science, modern languages, and mathematics was substituted). A boy in Third Form (Ninth Grade) read Macaulay's *Lays*, Longfellow's *Evangeline*, Irving's *Allhambra*, Franklin's *Autobiography*, and Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

The 1901 school catalog included information on physical training and health: "Regular exercise by means of the usual field sports is required of

each boy during the spring and fall, and in the winter season skating, coasting, and hare and hounds are utilized to keep the boys in the open air as much as possible.”

Sports always play a large role in private schools, and CHA was no exception. Baseball, football, track, and basketball were always available, with tennis, squash, ice hockey (outdoors in those days), soccer, and swimming offered as the boys’ interest required. In those early years, the CHA teams were often quite good, with basketball and football winning championships in both 1914 and 1915.

Music and drama were also mainstays of the school’s program. From 1902 to 1938, Charles H. Elwell was in charge of the musical groups, among them a mandolin club, a band, and various singing organizations. Regular performances were given throughout the year.

The dramatic group – known as the Sock and Buskin Club—often produced minstrel shows, a popular form of entertainment for the period.

A major extracurricular development was the appearance, in 1903, of *The Wissahickon*, the school’s first student publication. A combination student newspaper and literary magazine, it was published monthly and reported heavily on sports.

*The Wissahickon’s* function as a literary magazine was as important as its role as a newspaper. Some of the content was of high caliber but some was in the form of jokes, many of which were even less sophisticated than this one, which appeared in the November 1911 issue: ““Second former: If they wanted some new chess men, where would they get them?’ ‘Third Former: at the pawn shop, of course.””

*The Wissahickon* also served as the school’s yearbook, with reports on graduation, college choices, and end-of-the-year awards in each year’s June issue. That changed in 1911 when the first edition of *The Caerulean* appeared. *The Caerulean* has served as the school’s yearbook ever since.

It is according to *The Wissahickon* that the first Light Blue/Dark Blue competition took place in the fall of 1908, not as a field day as we now know it, but rather as seasonal competitions. The first contest was a football game played in October. The Dark Blues won 14-13.

There is no hard evidence about when the school adopted light and dark blue as its official colors, but it was likely sometime in the middle of the last century's first decade. As late as 1903 the colors, according to archival records, were brown and gold. The Light Blue/Dark Blue competitions were designed, according to *The Wissahickon*, "to provide amusement for the boarders on Saturday afternoons." Once the Blue and Blue competitions were established they would continue in one form or another throughout the school's history.

Religion played a major role in the school's early life. The 1901 school catalogue states that "the school is opened each day by a simple religious service and evening prayers are held at the close of the day." Boarding boys were required to go church on Sundays at a church of their parents' choosing.

At their meeting on June 6, 1904, the trustees declared that religious teachings "shall be in conformity with the principles and spirit of the Protestant Episcopal Church." The Episcopal bishop of Pennsylvania was elected board president. An immediate consequence of this action became apparent that fall when it was disclosed that the number of students had declined, in part "owing to the loss of the Roman Catholic boys."

The school's relationship with the Episcopal Church continued until 1926, when the following appeared in the school catalogue for the first time: "Although Chestnut Hill Academy is without denominational bias it is distinctly a Christian school and the boys are expected to conform to the school regulations in regard to chapel and church services." Nevertheless the church ties remained strong. Sunday Services were conducted at the neighboring Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Episcopal bishops continued to serve as board president until 1930.

On two occasions, in 1904 and 1917, the Houston Estate, managed by Samuel F. Houston, an Episcopal Academy graduate, offered to finance a merger of the two schools. The first effort foundered when Episcopal could not abide the requirement that the students attend St. Martin's. In the second instance there was a vehement reaction from students, alumni, and parents against the surviving institution's name not being Chestnut Hill Academy.

During the Patterson years, the world around the academy changed rapidly. With war on the horizon, a cadet corps and rifle team were established. During what was known as the Great War, students raised over \$1 million for the Liberty Loan drives. Thirteen CHA alumni lost their lives. In their honor, the Alumni Gold and Silver Medals were established, awards that today are still considered the school's most prestigious.

After 26 years as headmaster, Dr. Patterson stepped down in 1923, although he would remain on the faculty as a math teacher for three more years. During his time at the helm, the school increased its enrollment from 57 to almost 300.

Charles H. Landreth '29, a student when Patterson retired, said in an oral history interview that "James Lawson Patterson was the heart of Chestnut Hill Academy."

Theophilus Rodgers Hyde succeeded Patterson. A Yale graduate, Hyde came to CHA from the Hill School and was hired because of his boarding school experience.

Students were no longer given options of Classical or Scientific academic tracks. "No boy will be permitted to enter the Sixth Form [12<sup>th</sup> Grade] who does not have a reasonable chance of graduating with his class or of securing admission to college in September following graduation" warned the 1925 catalog. Now the Third Form read Scott's *Quentin Durward*, Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; and masterpieces of British literature.

During Hyde's first year, CHA became a member of the Inter-Academic League. Founded in 1887, the Inter-Ac is the oldest inter-scholastic athletic league in the United States. The 1920s were a time of strong CHA teams, many of which, most notably the 1929 baseball team, won championships.

Another major, and long lasting, achievement of Hyde's tenure was the establishment in 1927 of *The Campus Lantern*, which became the campus newspaper, a function that *The Wissahickon* had previously served.

Boarders, who on average made up one-third of the school, had their own activities, some of which were sanctioned, such as trips to Center City for concerts, plays, and other events. Faculty entertained boys in their homes, as did the parents of the day students.

Some activities, however, were not sanctioned. In the summer 1989 edition of *CHA News* faculty member Paul Hines described some of the shenanigans as written by former boarders. One boarder revealed that the prohibition on radios in the 1920s led several students to cut holes in their rooms' floors so that they could conceal their radios and then, late at night, listen to the music broadcasts of the day.

Another boarder remembered that "Bat-chasing, the flying furry variety, became very competitive." Charles Knowles '30 recalled that evening study hall was disturbed when a shot put was rolled down the steps from the third floor. Knife and dart throwing were also popular.

The fire escapes were the means of other-than-fire escape from school after curfew. "The fugitive's destinations would include Foster's, an ice cream and soda fountain store at the corner of Germantown and Willow Grove avenues, or the movie theatre in Germantown."

Barclay Douglas '29 and Sam Winslow '27 took a night train to New York City, spent the night on Broadway, and returned the next morning in time for breakfast and exams!

The school was thriving academically when, on October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. The 1930's Depression brought CHA's tenuous financial circumstances, which for years had been masked by the largesse of the Houston family, to a crisis and precipitated the most difficult period in the school's history.

Hyde departed Chestnut Hill in 1930 to become the headmaster of the Lakeside School in Seattle, Washington. The trustees – at the urging of the students, faculty, and parents – selected longtime faculty member Gilbert Haven Fall to be acting headmaster. This was the first time, but not the last, that a headmaster was chosen from within the school.

A New Hampshire native, Fall graduated from Dartmouth in 1905, taught for one year in Vermont, and then came to CHA in 1906. He was a

popular Latin and history teacher and successful coach who was ripe to take on the challenges the school was facing as it entered its fourth decade in the Wissahickon Inn. It didn't take the board long to see they had the right man. In January 1931, he became the permanent headmaster, a job he would hold until 1936 when he opted to return to teaching fulltime.

It was on his watch that the first major change in the nature of the school occurred. With enrollment falling in the boarding department, the University of Pennsylvania's Dr. E.D. Grizzell made a survey of the academy in 1933-1934. The report found that the Depression was responsible for the diminution in boarding enrollment. It also found that the expenses to run that division continued to be, in the report's words, "disastrously high." Grizzell recommended that the school become a country day school and that it should try to gain more support in the community, a decision that the school immediately implemented.

"This ended an era," Ruth Parachini reported in the centennial history, "when students had come to the Academy from thirty-two states, the District of Columbia and fourteen foreign countries. Most of the students from outside the United States had come from Central and South American countries, some of them natives of those countries and some of them sons of American families living abroad. Japan, South Africa and Newfoundland were represented. Possibly the most interesting foreign boys were four princes of the royal family of Siam [now Thailand]."

When Fall resigned to return to teaching, Frederic E. Camp, a Princeton graduate, was engaged as headmaster, a job he held for only three years, resigning in 1939 after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

For all the financial challenges the school faced, not everything was dreary. The sports teams continued to do well and the students' social activities were plentiful. Major big bands of the era – Erskine Hawkins, Bunny Berigan, and Harry James among them – came to the school for its proms.

But the school continued to suffer financially. The Great Depression was in full swing. Europe was at war. Hitler was on the move. In order to preserve the school, the trustees turned not to an educator but to a local businessman, Charles Platt Jr.

Platt had attended CHA as a member of the class of 1921. He left to go to St. Mark's School. After attending Harvard, he graduated with honors from the University of Virginia in 1927, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He always had an interest in education so when the trustees called, he left a partnership in a successful insurance business to lead his alma mater during a very difficult financial period.

The first major change he worked on was the conversion of the academy from a privately owned institution to a public, nonprofit school. CHA continued to be the beneficiary of the Houston and Woodward families' generosity. The land and the buildings belonged to them, but they never interfered in the school's day-to-day affairs. When the school was a proprietary corporation fundraising was difficult since none of the contributions would be tax deductible. In what was described at the time as the Houston Estate's "most generous gift of all," it deeded the property and the buildings to the school, allowing it to reincorporate as a nonprofit institution in the Commonwealth in 1940.

(During the negotiations surrounding the charter's reincorporation, CHA's counsel was Joseph S. Clark '18. The master overseeing the proceedings was Hugh D. Scott Jr. Both men would go on to serve Pennsylvania in the United States Senate: Clark, a Democrat, from 1957 to 1969; Scott, a Republican, from 1959 to 1977. Scott was the Republican leader in the Senate during the Watergate scandal and played a central role in convincing President Richard M. Nixon to resign in August 1974.)

The school's 1941 catalog explained that "The Academy is fundamentally a college preparatory school. The Upper School course of study, however, is designed not only to provide thoroughly for College Entrance Board requirements but moreover to furnish a broad cultural secondary education, and an approach to a disciplined useful way of life." Now the Third Form boys' course of study in English included Thurber, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Tale of Two Cities*, and *As You Like It*.

The reincorporation helped, but with the coming of the war in Europe and the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, financial conditions went from bad to worse. Faculty members left to go into the military, as did some Upper School students. The minutes of a special board meeting held August 26, 1942, include the following:

Whereas the participation of our country in the war has called to the colors many of our patrons and many of our faculty, and whereas economic uncertainties resulting from the war have caused the withdrawal of students from the Upper School, so that the remaining Upper School enrollment is deemed insufficient for the continued efficient operation of this department, be it resolved that for the duration of the war the educational span of the Academy be limited to the kindergarten and first eight grades; and be it further resolved that due notice of the elimination of grades nine to twelve be at once given to the parents of all boys enrolled in the school.

At about that time Platt also announced that he would leave the school to enter the United States Navy. As drastic as all this change was, Parachini reports that “At this critical time Chestnut Hill Academy had three strong assets[:] a small group of parents and friends who believed that the community needed the school; an undiscouraged faculty; and Robert A. Kingsley. Mr. Kingsley had been teaching modern languages at the Academy for seventeen years. In December, 1942, he was appointed Headmaster.”

With these three assets, Chestnut Hill Academy would eventually emerge from the devastations of depression and war.



## Chapter 4

### The Kingsley years: 1942-1965

The United States' entry into World War II exacerbated the financial woes Chestnut Hill Academy already faced. During the months following Pearl Harbor the headmaster, Charles Platt, and several faculty members joined the armed forces.

The school's health was so precarious that the academy's upper four grades were eliminated just a month before the 1942 school year was to begin. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that the school's "governing board was publicly expressing doubts that the school could survive."

It was in this uncertain climate that Robert A. Kingsley became Platt's successor to head the school.

Kingsley's daughter, Anne Blake Torrey, said in an interview for this history that her father "had to beg the board to let him take over the school – and to keep it open."

Elizabeth "Susie" Colt (later Mrs. E. Perot Walker), who was the headmaster's secretary at the time, recalled that the circumstances "led many to believe that the school should close. There was at least one person standing in opposition to this drastic plan: Robert Kingsley," she said.

"Mr. Kingsley was convinced, and he convinced everyone else concerned," Ruth Parachini wrote in the school's centennial history, "that what was left of the school was solid and strong, a foundation on which could be built a Chestnut Hill Academy larger and more successful than it had ever been."

Robert A. Kingsley was born in Bangor, Maine, July 24, 1899. After graduating from Brown in 1920 he taught in private schools in Maine, coming to Chestnut Hill to teach French and Spanish in 1923. After two years, he left to study at the University of Toulouse, returning to CHA in 1927.

Kingsley took the reins on December 1, 1942, and set out, without delay, to rebuild. The first task was to increase the enrollment of 112, then described as “dangerously low.”

The school’s future immediately began to brighten. Only two weeks after he began, Kingsley reported to the board that there might be sufficient interest to add a 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the 1943-1944 school year. That optimism was borne out when the nine-grade school opened in September 1943 with 175 students, representing a 56 percent increase in just one year.

Within a year, the board had become believers. The October 12, 1943, minutes of the board acknowledged Kingsley’s “skills, determination, and success,” and noted, “the faculty has been greatly strengthened and the high educational standards of the Academy have been maintained and broadened. ... [He has] demonstrated to the community that a nine-grade school is a sound educational unit.”

A nine-grade school, however well it was received, was never the ultimate goal. The aim was to re-establish CHA as a full 12-year college preparatory school.

Dr. Carl H. Delacato, who came to CHA as a teacher and administrator in 1945, said in the Spring 2006 *CHA News*, “Everyone who was there when there was a Senior School was unhappy when it was missing. There was a feeling that we were somehow not really a school. The plan to rebuild the Senior School was to [first] build up the Junior School. We knew that when we had enough kids, the Senior School would take care of itself. Bob Kingsley was pushing the hardest.”

As part of his rebuilding effort, Kingsley made innumerable phone calls and visits to local families, urging them to send their boys to CHA. He started a summer camp that attracted both students and faculty. He also initiated a pre-school/kindergarten program that would become the source of many students in the Junior School and, ultimately, in the Senior School as well.

His efforts resulted in a rapid growth during the 1940s. From an enrollment of 112 in 1942 and 175 in 1943, the school’s student body increased to 288 in 1946 (equaling the school’s previous all-time record

enrollment) and to 354 in 1950. In order to serve the students' needs, the faculty also grew, from 15 in 1942 to 31 in 1950.

For the 1950-1951 school year there were not enough students returning after 8th grade for the school to support a 9th grade. While the enrollment continued to grow overall, for that one year the school was an eight-grade school. That's the only time, other than 1942-1943, when CHA wasn't at least a nine-grade institution.

Although Kingsley clearly was the leader and the primary force behind the school's growth, he always credited the faculty for creating an institution that appealed to an increasingly large number of local families. It was the teachers who were responsible for maintaining a quality academic program and providing "a friendly, informal and cooperative atmosphere where students and parents alike would feel at home without detracting from the scholastic program."

Many of the faculty who came to CHA during the Kingsley years would stay on throughout the years of expansion and, in some cases, beyond. Teachers who were instrumental in the transformation and are a part of many alumni memories include, to name only a few: Tom Ambler, Owen Boyer h'74, John Brock h'68, Dan Charles h'66, Al Conkey h'68, Barbara Crawford h'75 (the first and, for many years, the only woman teaching in the upper grades, having replaced her husband, Sam Feinstein, when he joined the Army in 1942), Betty Cressman h'74, Dick Cutler h'68, Carl Delacato, Chris Donner, Madeleine Harper, Amelia Lodge, Hal Parachini '33, Bill Pass, Dave Rutter h'75, Frank Steel Sr. '29, Percy Wales h'64, Perot Walker h'73, Mary White, Harry Worrall h'70, and Ted Wright h'73.

Ambler, who taught science and Bible from 1943 until 1959, said in an interview for this history, "Bob trusted and backed his faculty." He also said that building back the Senior School was something "we always had in mind. Building the school was fun."

This enthusiasm for a shared goal gave many of the teachers the energy to take on responsibilities for several different courses, as well as serve outside the classroom as coaches and advisors. Music teacher Conkey, for example, taught, at one time or another, English, Latin, history, and math as well as music. He also coached three sports and conducted all the school's music groups. Parachini, a faculty member since 1937, served

*simultaneously* as the school's athletic director and business manager. He also taught Spanish.

As with most boys' schools, CHA was firmly committed to boys being educated by men after the third grade. Women, however, took a prominent role in other ways. On May 22, 1951, Mrs. Sydney (Jane) Lea, Mrs. George (Isabel) Reath, and Mrs. Floyd T. (May) Starr became the first three women to serve as full members of CHA's board of directors.

As the school grew and the need for volunteers increased, a mothers' committee, later known as the Women's Advisory Committee, was formed. Its first major project was a fundraising dinner dance for the parents launched in 1945. Called Hey Day, it was a major annual school event for more than 50 years.

Hey Day was only one of the many measures that were undertaken in an effort to establish a strong financial base. While there were still families whose generosity would help sustain the school, wider support was sought. To that end, in 1950 CHA became one of the first secondary schools to establish an annual giving program.

Talk about reestablishing the upper grades began at the board level in 1947. After two years of discussion, a 1949 survey of the school's parents was taken to see if there was interest in CHA once again becoming a 12-grade institution. That survey's results were mixed, with many families preferring to send their sons to boarding schools rather than take a chance on a school that had no track record with high school subjects and college admissions.

Two years later, however, a similar survey showed sufficient support for the move, and on April 7, 1952, the board approved a plan to add a 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 1953, an 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 1954, and a 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 1955.

Costs for the expansion were figured at about \$5,000 per year for three years. Five new faculty members would be needed: one the first year and two for each of the following years.

So it was done. The boys in second form (8<sup>th</sup> grade) at the time the decision was made would become, in June 1956, the first class to graduate from CHA since 1942.

As described in that class' 50<sup>th</sup> reunion reflection in the Spring 2006 *CHA News*, their progress toward graduation posed major challenges for the school and its headmaster:

Leading and managing students over four years of completely new ground.... meant adding courses and faculty one grade at a time, reestablishing a half-dozen or more athletic teams and helping create extracurricular icons, such as a school newspaper, where none existed.

and

[To] somehow convinc[e] the top colleges in the U.S. to look favorably on the first class of students from a small new prep school which was almost completely unknown to them.

CHA met all the challenges. The school needed, of course, to add academic courses appropriate to the boys as they progressed through their high school years. Freshmen studied English, algebra, Latin, French or Spanish, ancient history, art or shop, music, and physical education.

The next year biology was added to the mix, the first of a three-year exposure to science, followed by chemistry and physics. In Form IV (10<sup>th</sup> grade) ancient history was replaced by modern European history, to be followed by two years of American and Pennsylvania history.

After two years of algebra, the students learned geometry in Form V and solid geometry and trigonometry their senior year. Their senior year also included a course entitled "Problems of Democracy" and classes in public speaking.

In 1957, the school underwent one of the required evaluations by visiting committees of both the Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools and the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges. According to Kingsley, those evaluations included "helpful criticism ... and many commendations."

One of those committees' chairmen closed his report with these words:

The committee concludes its report in stating that Chestnut Hill Academy ... represents independent education in its finest tradition, - (*sic*) academically, morally, and spiritually. It preserves a happy balance between insistence on the intellectual disciplines and freedom to explore and experiment with what is new and sound.

As the boys grew and matured, the sports program grew with them. By their senior year, the school once again had a varsity baseball team and several junior varsity programs that would gain varsity status within a couple of years. Father and Son dinners were held to honor individual and team successes and improvement.

The '56ers also revived the long dormant school publications: *The Campus Lantern*, the student newspaper; and *The Caerulean*, the school yearbook. (*The Wissahickon*, the school's literary magazine, would reappear in 1958.)

A drama group, renamed the Players, and many instrumental and vocal musical ensembles, also returned. A student government was established. To leaven school life, school dances were held during the year. When the Class of 1956 graduated, the basic elements of a diverse academic, athletic, and extracurricular program were in place.

For a school with no recent history with colleges, the academy's first graduates in 14 years did extremely well: seven members of the 14-member class were accepted at and attended Ivy League schools: five at Princeton, one at Harvard, and one at Yale. The others also went to highly respected institutions.

For the members of the Class of 1956 it was an exciting time. They were the school's senior class for an unprecedented four years. Clearly they were under a microscope; how they did socially, academically, and athletically would set the bar for the classes to follow.

There has always been speculation, never proven, that this class was selected to be first because it was, in '56er John Achenbach's words, "A pretty good group of guys, pretty balanced with no bad apples."

Still, another member of that pioneer class, John McDevitt, observed, "I don't think we looked at ourselves as [pacesetters]. It wasn't impressed

upon us that we had added responsibility. We just were pretty normal teenagers working our way through our high school years. I don't think there was any pressure put on us."

With the school's expansion, its deferred physical needs became more acute.

The first improvement addressed was for additional athletic and locker room space. Faculty member Perot Walker, in an oral history interview conducted in 1986, summed up the situation: "The old locker rooms were primitive. There was hardly room for anybody in there to change their mind let alone their clothes." New locker rooms, with ample room for everyone to change clothes, were completed in 1956.

The school also needed dedicated laboratory space for the more sophisticated science courses being taught in the Upper School. C. Mahlon Kline, at the urging of his niece Jane Lea, gave the school its science building, which opened in 1959.

The upper portion of the new gymnasium, a state-of-the-art basketball court with bleachers seating 700, was completed in time for the school's centennial in 1961.

Two other construction projects that were not part of the CHA campus would also affect the school. The construction of the Wissahickon Skating Club on the westernmost part of the school's property in 1956 gave the school's students additional athletic and recreational options.

And what is likely the most important long-term development was Springside School's construction, in 1957, of a new campus on Cherokee Street, a five-minute walk from CHA.

In what was a harbinger of the schools' working together in the years ahead, CHA and Springside launched a joint fundraising campaign. Its goal was to raise \$700,000 for Springside and \$300,000 for CHA.

In a report to the community at the time of the academy's centennial, Headmaster Kingsley said, "Never before had two schools united their efforts in a common drive for funds. The new Springside was built, and

the expansion of Chestnut Hill Academy, its facilities, and its programs was given a tremendous boost.”

The spirit of cooperation continued three years later when the two schools’ women’s committees opened the Clothes Closet, a used-clothing store that is still going strong. There would be more—much more—to come.

By 1960 the school passed the 500-student mark for the first time. It was thriving athletically with most sports having returned to the Inter-Academic League. Football was the last to rejoin, returning to the league in 1962. A crew program was added in 1962, with wrestling beginning a year later.

CHA’s academic philosophy during Kingsley’s time put the emphasis on the individual student. That philosophy was succinctly described in a school prospectus printed in the late 1940s:

***General Educational Policy.*** Chestnut Hill Academy seeks to develop the mental, moral, physical and aesthetic aspects of the personality of each pupil, with the idea of creating a balanced and well-rounded individual conscious of his obligations to society. Since the youth of today is destined to become the leader of tomorrow, we seek to develop to the fullest the potentialities of each child.

We hold that all children are not similarly endowed, that each one must be encouraged to develop his talents to the fullest at his own best rate; that each child’s educational program can best be stimulated by the acquisition on his part of a free and independent spirit of inquiry; that such acquisition will result in ever-increasing ability to think for himself, and to marshal (*sic*) facts in orderly and logical sequence before forming a conclusion.

In 1961, CHA celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a gala Centennial Ball, the publication of Ruth Parachini’s centennial history, and the school’s first full-fledged production of a musical, Lerner and Loewe’s *Brigadoon*.

A year after the school’s centennial ended, CHA entered what was at the time viewed as new and controversial territory. When school opened in the fall of 1962, John Gordon Crippins was a member of the new



Kindergarten. What made this newsworthy is that young John was black. He was, so far as we can determine, the first student of color to attend Chestnut Hill Academy.

His mother, Louise Patterson, reports that his time at CHA was positive, that the parents were accepting and inclusive, and that she felt very little if any prejudice from what had been an all-white institution.

Also notable is that Crippins' admission seems to have simply been part of business as usual in Kingsley's school. Board minutes record no discussions about breaking the color barrier. The regular admissions reports made to the board that fall made no note that one of the new students was black.

Crippins left the school after 4<sup>th</sup> grade. It wasn't until 1969 when the first black student, Henry Decker Carnes III '69, graduated. Crippins' arrival seven years earlier broke a barrier just as the Civil Rights Movement was becoming a major force in American society.

In 1963 Mrs. T. Carrick Jordan – Jane Lea's mother and Mahlon Kline's sister – underwrote the entire cost of the Jordan Primary Building to house the school's youngest boys in Kindergarten and first and second grades.

With the Jordan Building's completion and the move of the running track from the baseball field to the football field on St. Martin's Green, the campus was in condition to meet the student body's needs.

Bob Kingsley announced that he planned to retire following the 1964-1965 school year. Celebrations of his time at CHA and of the extraordinary legacy that he and his beloved wife, Dolly, would leave were numerous during his last year. Reviewing Kingsley's 42 years at the school and 23 as headmaster, Charlie Landreth '29 summed up his importance to CHA. "Robert Kingsley," he said, "was the savior of Chestnut Hill Academy."

Kingsley was the 1965 recipient of the Chestnut Hill Community Association's Chestnut Hill Award, the organization's top honor. That was a fitting tribute because of Kingsley's belief, in 1942, that Chestnut Hill

deserved a quality school for boys, and that CHA, then in so much trouble, was an indispensable asset to the community.

The citation that accompanied the award said in part, "As Teacher, Athletic Coach and Headmaster, Robert A. Kingsley has made an unparalleled contribution through the disciplining of young minds and bodies to mature growth and potential service to this and other communities."

When Bob Kingsley ended his tenure on June 30, 1965, leaving with the title headmaster emeritus, he left to his successor, Nathaniel Saltonstall II, a school that was strong and healthy, with an enrollment of 480 and a 50-member faculty.

The years ahead, while not as difficult as those when Kingsley took over, would provide the institution with a whole new set of challenges and opportunities. Bob Kingsley's example of how to deal with both would be an example and an inspiration for a new generation of Chestnut Hill Academy leaders.

## Chapter 5

### It's not just academic

Schools today can no longer offer only readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic, the traditional "Three 'R's." To be successful they have had to change the alphabet from those three R's to a more inclusive four A's: academics, athletics, arts, and activities.

Chestnut Hill Academy has always held the academic program's excellence as its highest priority. It is, after all, the quality of the classroom experience that forms a school's reputation, both as a draw for the best students and as preparation for education and life after graduation.

With the increasing recognition that an education consists of much more than studying the conventional subjects, however, Chestnut Hill Academy has, over time, expanded its program to provide a wide diversity of experiences.

The school's programs in athletics and arts, and its activities all have roots in curricular requirements. CHA, as could be expected of a boys' school, always included a physical education program and a strong focus on competitive sports. One of CHA's earliest headmasters, James Patterson, concluded a treatise on "Scholarship" by observing, "without a sound body a highly trained mind is of comparatively slight service to the world."

Classes in the arts began as "freehand drawing," and "vocal music" for Lower and Middle School students, then grew to full offerings of painting, print work, and pottery, instrumental training, orchestra playing, and music appreciation, theory, and literature.

Class trips, outdoor and service programs were required activities that were at times academically related and at others designed to provide "maturing experiences."

The three non-academic A's – athletics, arts, and activities – give the student choices based on his interests, either through participation in sports, elective courses, or other extra-curricular activities.

## Athletics

Of all the non-academic pursuits in a boys' school athletics is pre-eminent. From its early years – when promotional literature featured the playing fields, gym, and other sports facilities – to the present day, the school has asserted the importance of the athletic programs in the CHA student's development.

Athletics serve several purposes. At an elemental level they give the testosterone-driven young men a release for their pent-up energy. On a more refined level, athletics have many benefits.

Headmaster Frank Steel '77 says, "Sports are important because they provide a framework and opportunity in which kids can grow as full human beings. You learn about discipline. You learn teamwork.

"In team sports boys are given the opportunity to challenge themselves, to face failure and sometimes, depending on the sport, face physical peril and conquer their fears."

While football, basketball, track, and soccer were the only sports available in 1901, today there are 14: football, soccer, and cross country in the fall; basketball, squash, ice hockey, wrestling, and indoor track in the winter; and baseball, track, tennis, crew, golf, and lacrosse in the spring.

The first really successful CHA team was the undefeated 1910 football team. In 1923 CHA joined the nation's oldest inter-scholastic league: The Inter-Academic League, then composed of five schools: Germantown Academy, Episcopal Academy, Penn Charter, Haverford School, and St. Luke's School.

In the 1920s and 1930s baseball was king, with the 1927 and 1929 teams Inter-Ac champs and 1930's team sharing the title. The 1941 football team, although not playing in the Inter-Ac, was undefeated.

The athletic program changed radically in 1942 when the school eliminated its upper four grades. During the next 14 years, sports were required of all boys from 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade up. There was competition, some intra-mural and some with other schools. The success of those programs is

credited to Harold Parachini '33, a faculty member and coach since 1937 who served as athletic director during the years without an Upper School.

When the school again graduated a senior class in 1956, sports at the junior varsity and varsity levels were re-established. Baseball was the first to field a varsity team. Over the next few years basketball, track, and tennis rejoined the Inter-Ac, with the 1962 football squad being the last to do so.

CHA's relatively small enrollment long presented challenges to the sports program. In its nascent years, there was frequent opining in the student publication over the lack of participants on various teams. The March 1908 *Wissahickon* lamented: "In a small school like ours it is absolutely necessary that the greater part of the base ball team should be on the track team, and vice versa, if either of them is to be successful. We feel sure that everybody with the tiniest spark of school spirit will agree with us when we say that, unless a stude (*sic*) is physically incapable, there is no reason why every fellow in long trousers should not try for the [track] team."

Over the last 50 years, new sports have come, some have gone, and some have come and gone and come again.

In 1962 CHA crew, under the direction of Frank Steel Sr. '29, took to the Schuylkill for the first time.

Riflery began in the early 1900s and became prominent leading up to and during World War I. In more recent times it was either an inter-scholastic sport or a club activity. In 1999 it was closed down following the massacre at Colorado's Columbine High School.

Ice Hockey first became a varsity sport in 1976, was dropped in 1984, and returned in 2004. Talk about adding lacrosse began in the early 1970s, but it wasn't until 2004, when the school had grown sufficiently to support a team, that it was established.

Along the way, there have been bumps in the road. The biggest came in 1972 when the varsity football team was very small. After several injuries to key players, the squad was reduced to 18. The school physician, Charles T. "Chat" Lee H'77, recommended that the season be suspended.

It was, and the decision was made to take a leave of absence from the Inter-Ac.

Five years later, playing an independent schedule that included Haverford School and Episcopal Academy from the Inter-Ac, the school's gridgers had what may be their best season ever. That 1977 squad was undefeated, outscoring its opponents 235 to 16.

CHA and some neighboring independent and small public schools formed the Independence Football League in 1985. Between 1986 and 2005, when CHA football rejoined the Inter-Ac, CHA won 10 IFL crowns.

During the period from 1956 to 2009, CHA has won numerous championships in many sports. A sampling: soccer won seven consecutive Inter-Ac crowns from 1987 to 1994; squash won six straight starting in 1998; tennis had a five-year run from 1994 through 1998; and track won seven league championships between 1989 and 2002. Golf was league co-champion in 1988 and 1989.

Doubtless there have been dozens of memorable individual games. There is one, however, that more than any other has become legendary.

On November 17, 1973, CHA played for the Inter-Ac soccer championship against Episcopal Academy. The game was the last of the season and the last on Blue-White-Blue Day, for many years an annual event pitting all the CHA fall teams against all their Episcopal counterparts.

On what is now Talbot Field, an estimated 2,000 people watched CHA and Episcopal play 70 minutes of soccer that ended with CHA's last-minute goal giving them a 2-1 victory and with it their first Inter-Ac soccer championship. The win capped a 23-game unbeaten streak that started during the 1972 season. For soccer coach Jim Talbot H'81 it was "the most exciting athletic event I've ever been part of."

In the academy's early years coaches were exclusively teachers or administrators, many of whom coached two or three seasons.

In recent years the school has employed a combination of faculty and outside coaches. While, according to Headmaster Steel, "The teacher/coach is still the preferred model," it's no longer realistic.

Stan Parker '68 – CHA's faculty dean, History Department chairman, varsity baseball coach and, from 2000 to 2004, the school's athletic director – says, "The reality is we offer so many sports at so many different levels that we don't have the personnel to do it and do it well. Outside coaches bring with them another approach, a different philosophy, a different personality, which is good for the kids. Outside coaches can also bring a knowledge of a different geographic area where the school might look for students."

Of the thousands of CHA boys who have played for those coaches, several have gone on to distinguish themselves in their sports. Charles R. "Monk" Meyer '32 was an All-America end at the United States Military Academy where he was also captain of the basketball team and lettered in track and lacrosse.

Stanley W. Pearson '36 was one of the country's leading squash players in the 1940s and 1950s and has been inducted into the Squash Hall of Fame.

Figure skater Scott Cramer '76 was an internationally ranked figure skater who represented the United States in many competitions and was a member of two Olympic teams. His career continued on the professional level after he stopped competing as an amateur.

Former CHA rowers Adam Holland '90 and Tom Paradiso '98 went on to compete in the Olympics. David Miller '92 and Michael Koplove '95 went on to play professional baseball. Both spent time in "the show," the major leagues.

To honor these and other CHA athletes, coaches, and teams, the Chestnut Hill Academy Athletic Hall of Fame was founded in 2000. In the four ceremonies held so far, 42 players, eight teams, and five coaches have been inducted. The coaches are soccer's Jim Talbot H'81; 1920s and 1930s football, basketball, and baseball coach William E. Shuttleworth H'38; 1960s and 1970s basketball and baseball coach Robert A. "Maje" McDonnell H'06, who spent more than 50 years as a Philadelphia Phillies coach and member of the team's community relations department; varsity football coach (assistant coach 1975-1981; head coach 1981-2004) and physical education chairman Jack Plunkett H'92; and Lenny

Morrow H'93, assistant to the athletic director from 1968 to 2002, Middle School football and baseball coach, and physical education instructor.

Sports clearly have played a significant role in the school's culture, serving as a rallying point to spark school spirit and reinforce alumni pride and loyalty. CHA's annual Blue and Blue Day, with its iconic tug-of-war, has brought the whole school out onto the playing fields. Homecomings have been the occasion for student rallies around the bonfire and alumni returning to campus.

### Arts

Students who were not all that interested in sports have expressed themselves from time to time. In 1969 a Curriculum Committee recommended an end to mandatory athletics outside of the school day hours, with an option to substitute an activity or project "deemed valuable either to himself, the school—or both."

More recently, a student wrote in a 2004 *Campus Lantern*, "Chestnut Hill Academy has a ridiculous sports requirement" and went on to present numbers to show a disproportionate emphasis given the sports program over other activities, and even academic classes. He observed that the Players are using "a retrofitted *barr*" (italics his). The arts have always had their fans.

In 1907, a drama club, The Sock and Buskin Club (the sock and buskin are two symbols of comedy and tragedy taken from Greek theater footwear), was established. The club's first two performances, *Lodgings to Let* and *Pipkin's Rustic Retreat*, were received with much hilarity, in great part due to the costumes and performances of the boys playing girls.

Sock and Buskin disbanded in 1924. For the next decade, in addition to the occasional Upper School performances and entertainments, the only regular dramatic productions were the annual Lower School pageants that marked the end of the school year. Reflecting classroom work, themes included scenes relating to Robin Hood, Charlemagne, and Teddyuscung.

In 1935 a theater group called The Players appeared and produced shows until 1942 when the school eliminated its upper four grades. The Players



returned with the first graduating class in 1956, no longer relying on boys in female roles. Girls from nearby schools, principally Springside, trod the boards with the CHA boys.

Over the years The Players has done some demanding work, including several Shakespeare plays and such heavyweight dramas as Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, and Moisés Kaufman's *The Laramie Project*.

Since staging Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon* in 1961, musicals have been a regular feature of The Players' seasons. Among those produced were *The Fantasticks*, *My Fair Lady*, *Oliver!*, *Oklahoma*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Sound of Music*, *Grease*, and several Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.

The performing arts endured less than ideal facilities for years. For the first three-quarters of the last century they used whatever space was available. The main venue was the Woodward Gymnasium, already stretched to its limits. Finally, through the hard work of students and faculty and a small budget, the old Recreation Building was converted into a performing arts center. It opened January 17, 1974.

The musical groups of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century included a mandolin club, a quintet and a choir. Ruth Parachini, in her centennial history, notes that the school's glee club (sometimes known as the choir or the chorus) was the school's oldest continuing organization.

Three men have chaired the music program for 96 of the last 108 years: Charles Elwell '38 from 1902 to 1938; Albert B. Conkey '66 from 1940 to 1978, with three years off to serve in World War II; and Roland Woehr '07 from 1985 to today.

One of Conkey's more memorable performances was the 1964 Christmas cantata *Emanuel*. Richard Brodhead '65, then a senior, composed the piece. The librettist was Doris Baizley, a 1963 Springside graduate. It was sung by the CHA and Springside glee clubs, with solos by faculty members Henry Putsch and William Reeves '53. The *Chestnut Hill Local* reported it was "an evening as exciting as we have ever witnessed."

When Conkey retired in 1978, the school's performing arts center, that "retrofitted *barn*," was named in his honor.

Reeves founded The Chestnut Hill Academy Pipers in 1966. The Pipers, dressed in kilts, frequently entertained with their bagpipes. Reeves left to teach at another school in 1972. The Pipers didn't survive without him.

Longer lasting, and joining the long-established chorus and orchestra, were musical groups established in the 1970s and 1980s: The Boy Choir, Hilltones, and the Jazz Ensemble, which continue today.

Even though the 1921 *Quarter Century Review* notes that in 1896 the boys spent half of Thursday carving wood or modeling clay "in accordance with the views of Mr. J. Liberty Tadd," there is sparse evidence of a thriving art program until 1942 when, because of the war, Barbara Crawford n'75 replaced her husband, Sam Feinstein, as CHA's art teacher.

Tucked away in the basement, she managed to bring light and inspiration to generations of students, her "Cellar Rats," whose efforts were exhibited on available wall space in the hallways off the Exchange and elsewhere around the school.

Crawford retired in 1990 as the longest-tenured faculty member in CHA's history. The studio moved into the new art wing when that was built in 2000. Its gallery was named in Crawford's honor.

In the fine arts program, painting, printmaking, etching, woodshop, metal shop, ceramics, photography, sculpture, digital art, filmmaking, and video production have, at varying times, been available to the students.

In the Spring 1998 *CHA News* Headmaster Richard Parker n'02 wrote about his doctoral thesis on CHA students' attitudes toward the arts. He found the boys took more credit units beyond what is required than at other independent schools. He also believed that the school's positive feedback for their involvement in arts programs allowed students to find that the arts fit into a view of masculinity within the school culture, even if not in the larger culture. He concluded that, for many, "arts had become part of their identities, and their continued participation is assured."

Barnaby Roberts H'90, CHA's headmaster from 1979 to 1990, remembers that before a football game at CHA, "here were these nine or 10 guys (the Hilltones) – some in football uniforms, some in soccer uniforms, some in civilian clothes – singing the National Anthem."

Headmaster Parker, recounting a similar experience, wrote in the winter 1997 *CHA News* that this was "emblematic of the way students of all ilks embrace the full CHA experience and especially the arts."

### Activities

Extra-curricular activities in the Upper School were modest before 1942. With the school's revitalization in the 1950s the opportunities to pursue interests and activities beyond the classroom expanded considerably.

The programs that take place outside the classroom, what has been called "*The Other Curriculum*," or the "experiential education," began in 1971 with the Junior School outdoor program and class trips to the Poconos and French Creek State Park.

Although intended primarily as science lessons on ecology, it was noted, "Other disciplines such as English, math, map making and surveying will also become a part of the program, as well as social and cultural history."

From this beginning, "the other curriculum" grew to include a rich variety of trips near (younger grades exploring the Wissahickon, class trips to local museums) and far (the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade's exchange program with Collegio Williams in Mexico City during the 1970s, and Upper School trips sponsored by the language department to France and Spain).

The "other curriculum" also came to include service to the community. Although seniors had been required to perform social service projects beginning in 1967, and community service had always been encouraged, it was not until 1987 that CHA launched a formal service program to match student interests with appropriate organizations.

In its first year, the boys participated in individual and class projects, including an exchange program with the Northern Home in Roxborough and the first of what would be several Special Olympics for the Cerebral Palsy Association, a program that is still going strong.

Unlike the relatively recent appearance of trips and service activities, the history of the clubs and associations takes us back more than a century. By 1905 Chestnut Hill Academy had music and dramatic clubs and also its first student publication, *The Wissahickon*, which had been launched in 1903. Initially it served as a literary magazine, a student newspaper, and a yearbook.

*The Caerulean* began publication as a yearbook in 1911, and, except for the years between 1943 and 1955, has been produced annually ever since. The *Campus Lantern* assumed reportorial duties in 1927. This left *The Wissahickon* as a literary magazine. While *The Lantern* has had, with the exception of that 1943-1955 period, an uninterrupted history, *The Wissahickon* has had an off-again, on-again existence, first disappearing in 1938 and not returning until the late 1950s.

There were other activities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1913, for instance, the school had a debating group called the Franklin Society, presumably named after Ben, and a chess club. For the most part, however, the boys were organized around music, drama, and publications.

Those three pursuits were reborn in the mid-1950's. There were also several additions.

A student government, in varying forms, has also been part of the Upper School's program since at least 1926. On a roller coaster for many years through the 1970s and 1980s, it would periodically form with great promise and then fade away. Finally a more respected organization was put into place in 1989.

It would be impossible to list, let alone describe, all of the extra-curricular activities that have come and gone in the last 50 years, but a survey of the yearbooks gives some idea of the variety. In 1960 there were property care, library, chapel and dance committees; in 1968: English committee, curriculum committee, library committee, audiovisual committee, Germantown Schools Community Council, chapel committee, senior and junior dance committees, and business committee (charged with securing advertising for student publications); in 1980, in a curiously slim offering, the Student Advisory Board and the curriculum committee alone are acknowledged; in 1990, student government, student guides,

athletic association, assembly committee, curriculum committee, student service board, chess team; in 2000, discipline committee, student guide association, chess club.

The Upper School in 2009 offered the widest variety of activities ever. In addition to *The Caerulean*, *Campus Lantern*, *Wissahickon*, The Players, student government, and the chess club there are The Blue Devil Investment Group, an eco club, a film club, a French club, a gay-straight alliance, a mock trial team, a multicultural student association, a philosophy group, a political debate group, a robotics program, student guides, a technology group, and a theoretical physics group.

Chestnut Hill Academy's small school community, which could be seen as limiting the availability of its non-academic programs, in fact came to be noted for the increased freedom it allowed students to participate in a diversity of experiences.

In the smaller setting there is less chance that a student will be pigeonholed as an athlete, an artist, or a geek. As CHA's late director of physical education, Jack Plunkett H'92, observed, "it gives [our students] an opportunity to know others who aren't on the football team or aren't just into drama or whatever. It makes our community stronger."

The 1903 school catalog described an important component of the school's educational program: "The boys of Chestnut Hill Academy are encouraged to engage in various lines of work outside of the regular curriculum ... [which] broaden and enrich the school life and promote manliness and self-reliance among the boys."

In its current mission statement CHA affirms that among its objectives is "To contribute to physical and emotional development through various programs—athletic, outdoor, community service, and co-curricular—that promote participation, sportsmanship, and teamwork."

The language may differ but the meaning is the same.



## Chapter 6

### Expanding and engaging the community: 1965-1979

Nat Saltonstall must know how John Adams felt.

Both men followed icons into office and both took over during tumultuous times.

Nathaniel Saltonstall II was born in Massachusetts in 1928, grew up in Hawaii, and graduated from Yale with a B.A. in philosophy in 1950. After Yale he worked as a cattle farm manager in Coosawhatchie, S.C. for two years. Saltonstall says that likely makes him the only prep-school headmaster who's a graduate of the Graham Scientific Breeding School.

He began teaching and coaching in 1952. Over the next 10 years he gained experience in the classroom and in administration, first at the Mooreland Hill School in New Britain, Conn., and then at the Kingswood School in West Harford. He also earned an M.A. in liberal studies from Wesleyan University.

In 1965, after three years as headmaster at the Lancaster (Pa.) Country Day School, CHA hired him. With wife Betsy, daughters Karen and Susan, and sons Timothy and Stewart, he moved to Chestnut Hill to take up the reins on July 1, 1965. At first they lived in the headmaster's apartment in the east wing of the Wissahickon Inn. In the spring of 1966 they moved across the street into the Springfield Avenue house that Charles B. Jennings '01's widow had bequeathed to the school.

The difficulty in following Robert Kingsley was not unexpected. Kingsley had led the school from a struggling wartime grade school to a thriving college prep school. "The overriding challenge," Saltonstall says, "was 'That's not the way Mr. Kingsley did it.' I knew that was coming. It was very clear that someone who had been there for [40-plus] years had made a tremendous impact on the school."

Not only did the new headmaster have to establish his own authority, he had to operate in the cultural climate of the 1960s, a time when authority was increasingly questioned.

During Saltonstall's first year, CHA and neighboring Springside began serious conversations about opening some Senior School courses to students from both institutions. In addition to the academic benefits, some major benefactors believed that cooperation between the two was vital to their long-term health.

"In my first year I had a luncheon date with Charlie Woodward," Saltonstall recalls. "He said, 'Nat, neither Springside nor Chestnut Hill Academy will receive another Woodward dollar until the schools take advantage of each other's strengths.'"

The coordinate program began modestly in the fall of 1966 when physics, taught at CHA by Springside's Florence Kleckner, and art history, taught at Springside by Elaine Weinstone, were opened to boys and girls.

Saltonstall sought to further broaden the student experience by developing a more diverse student body. Eventually, with the support of the faculty and board, CHA began to reach out beyond Chestnut Hill and its neighboring communities, whence it had drawn most of its students for years.

In 1967 Saltonstall initiated the Senior Service Project, which he describes as "the most meaningful thing that occurred during my time." The plan was for seniors, after hearing from colleges in the spring, "to drop *out of* school and drop *into* the program that was restricted to service to the community." The organizations at which the seniors volunteered included the Coatesville Veterans Hospital, Community Legal Services, Friends Neighborhood Guild, Haverford State Hospital's physical and occupational therapy department, Northwestern Mental Health Center, Philadelphia General Hospital, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

"It is the consensus of the seniors in this social service project," Bob Chambers and Tom Swain wrote in the March 10, 1967, *Campus Lantern*, "that these experiences have not only ameliorated their social awareness but also their general education and background. These seniors would like to display their appreciation to all those who have [made] the social service program possible."



In spite of the success of many of the new initiatives, some felt the changes were too much too soon. There was increasing tension between Saltonstall and the board that came to a head during an ambitious \$2.557 million capital funds drive.

CHA had long been able to depend on a few donors to make up financial deficits or fund new facilities or programs. Since these resources were no longer sufficient to meet the school's needs the Accent on Advancement Campaign was launched. It had four components: \$1 million for faculty salary endowment; \$807,000 for renovations to the Wissahickon Inn and relocating the dining room to the old swimming pool; \$500,000 for a performing arts center; and \$250,000 for a new swimming pool.

After getting off to a good start, the campaign began to struggle. It became clear that the performing arts center and the swimming pool would not be built.

Saltonstall addressed the board at length on January 12, 1971. He asked the board to clarify its role in solving the ongoing issues facing the academy, most immediately raising the money for the capital campaign.

In what can only be characterized as a remarkably candid and courageous move, he told them, "There remains the undeniable, overriding fact that no campaign of the magnitude of ours can be successful without the total and complete and enthusiastic support and activity of the Board of Trustees. In my honest opinion, this ingredient has been lacking."

His "honest opinion" led to an insurmountable rift. Saltonstall submitted his resignation on September 14, effective at the end of the 1971-1972 school year. In his resignation letter he wrote, "It is a difficult step which I take this evening, but one which appears to be in the best common interest."

Despite Saltonstall's unraveling rapport with board members and his own assessment that school morale was low, many faculty members were positive about him. Junior School head Thomson F. Davis reports that "Nat always showed me tremendous support."

Thomas A. Northrup, at the time a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and varsity basketball coach relates that the day after he told Saltonstall that a \$300

dental bill was forcing him to consider looking for a job outside of teaching, “I had a \$300 check in my mailbox with a note from Nat that said ‘This is not a loan, this is a gift. I hope you’ll stay in teaching.’” He did.

The academic focus of Saltonstall’s final year was on the school’s youngest students. Thom Davis saw that during their Junior School years many boys – too many, he felt – had to repeat at some point. The issue was readiness. He decided that a better foundation should be laid to prepare Kindergarten kids for “a pretty tough, academically-oriented curriculum, in reading especially.”

Working with Anne J. Torrey, the school’s reading specialist, and Dr. Katharine E. Goddard, CHA’s consulting child psychiatrist, Davis established the Pre-First year as a transition between Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, noting that, “CHA was a pacesetter in that.”

Elisabeth Schmid, the first Pre-First teacher, says that even after being told that the program would be a totally new experience for the boys some parents were concerned that this really was just a repeat of Kindergarten. Later, Schmid says, many of the doubting parents came back to thank her when their sons were thriving in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Another accomplishment in Saltonstall’s last year was the hiring of a full-time director of development in December 1971, a time when schools and colleges nationwide were establishing fundraising and public relations offices.

In addition to managing all fundraising, public relations, and publications, the Development Office coordinated Alumni Association activities. In its first year the Development Office also oversaw the merging of the Home School Association, the Women’s Advisory Committee (WAC), and the Chestnut Hill Academy Fathers (CHAF) into the Chestnut Hill Academy Parents Association.

The Home School Association had, since the school’s earliest days, offered topical programs for parents and organized parent/teacher nights.

WAC, founded in the early 1940s, ran the annual Hey Day dinner dance; managed, with Springside's women's committee, the Clothes Closet; and coordinated the class mothers whose responsibilities ranged from arranging class get-togethers to driving on school trips.

CHAF, according to the April 1965 *Alumni Parent Lantern*, was formed "to encourage all fathers of students at CHA in the interest and support of all programs of the Academy and, wherever appropriate, to offer constructive suggestions for improvement of same."

The new Parents Association's by-laws required that either the president or the vice-president be a father and the other a mother and that the secretary and treasurer also be divided with one being a mother and the other a father. The president and vice president were members of the school's board, as the WAC and CHAF chairpersons had been.

Saltonstall, for all the difficulties he faced, left the school financially healthy. He had hired strong faculty who would play a significant role going forward: Thom Davis, Ken Dreyfuss, Clark Groome '60, Dave Hoyler, Joyce Klinefelter, Mage McDonnell, Tom Northrup, Liz Schmid, Ed Stainton, Jim Talbot, Frank Thomson, Mimi White, and Gwen Young (CHA's first black teacher) among them.

He recognized that the times required a broader perspective and began the process of moving CHA from its historic role as a community school to one as a significant regional college prep school.

Gerrit M. Keator was chosen as Saltonstall's successor. In one of those odd coincidences he was also a Yale graduate with ties to Hawaii, coming to CHA from his post as assistant headmaster and dean of faculty at The Iolani School in Honolulu.

Born in Philadelphia in 1938, Keator grew up in Connecticut. He earned a B.A. in American Studies at Yale in 1961. A year in the United States Air Force Air Police was followed by eight months in a training program at Chubb & Sons, Inc., in New York City.

He left Chubb to teach middle school math and English and coach varsity ice hockey and lacrosse at Greenwich (Conn.) Country Day School. After

two years he returned to Yale, receiving an M.A.T. in history in 1965, after which Iolani hired him.

At Iolani he taught English, coached varsity soccer, served as assistant to the headmaster and director of development before taking on the responsibilities he held when CHA lured him back to the Mainland.

When Gerrit, wife Marnie, and young sons William, Matthew, and Sam, arrived at Jennings House in July 1972 one of the busiest periods in the school's history began.

According to many, the Keators were just what the school needed. "Gerrit Keator has hit Chestnut Hill Academy with an enthusiasm so great that it has affected almost every member of the CHA community," wrote George Strong and Stan Miller in a December 20, 1972, *Campus Lantern* op-ed column entitled "100 Days of G.M.K."

They went on to note that he seemed to be almost everywhere at once: attending games and athletic practices, acknowledging individual student achievements, and setting up an administration that "is working for the students and helping to build Chestnut Hill Academy into a giant in education."

Faculty from that time echo those students' views. Junior School teacher Liz Schmid said, "Gerrit seemed to be all over the place." She added that he also "listened to the women." Veteran math teacher Frank Thomson noted, "Gerrit was a breath of fresh air. He was the right guy at the right time."

During his first two years, Keator made some significant administrative and faculty appointments; approved and encouraged increased coordination with Springside; encouraged major changes to the academic program in the Middle School; negotiated the largest gift in the school's history; oversaw the conversion of the old recreation building into a performing arts center; endorsed the honoring of several iconic former faculty members; and generally acted, in Tom Northup's words, as the administration and faculty's head coach.

His first major decision came when the head of the Middle School left CHA days after the Keators landed in Philadelphia. To replace him, he tapped

Tom Northrup, by 1972 the chairman of the Social Studies Department and still varsity basketball coach. Prior to Keator's arrival Science Department Chairman Owen A. Boyer had been named head of the Senior School. Keator promoted David W. Hoyler to chair the Science Department.

Hoyler's appointment left a vacancy for a Senior School science teacher that was filled by Junior School science teacher Miriam "Mimi" White. White's promotion ended the tradition that only men would teach in the Senior School.

Throughout the Kingsley and Saltonstall years, the headmaster served as college counselor. (Kingsley wrote all his recommendations in long hand.) But as the headmaster's responsibilities became increasingly complex and colleges more demanding it became apparent that a full-time college counselor would make the admissions process better.

Keator agreed. Long-time faculty member Theodore C. Wright assisted Keator in his first year. Wright then assumed the role of full-time college counselor on July 1, 1973.

Six years after it began, the coordinate program with Springside had grown substantially. Springside Headmistress Agathe K. Crouter wrote about it in the April 1973 *Springside Bulletin*: "Boys and girls share campuses, work with a larger faculty, have new combinations of people in class, and choose from a wide range of courses in their last two years of school."

In science, she reported, 12 courses open to grades 10 through 12 were coordinate. They included introductory and advanced biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, qualitative analysis, and physics as well as "Science, Technology and Man," "Environmental Concerns," and "Science Fiction."

The nine members of the English departments offered juniors and seniors a choice of 23 trimester electives, including "Milton," "Hamlet and King Lear," "The Short Story," "The Poem as Tale," and "Great Letters." Additional courses in history, music, filmmaking, art, and art history made a total of 92 coordinate courses available for the 1973-1974 school year.

“Increasing the number of advanced courses available to students without adding faculty ... is a chief aim of coordination, but variety of opinion within the classroom is another advantage of the program,” Crouter wrote.

She did have a caution, however. “Coordination is not without difficulties, and not all classes turn out well. One teacher comments, ‘My class was dominated by the boys in a most unproductive way.’”

Despite these problems, both Keator’s CHA and Crouter’s Springside were committed to the program.

Both schools were also committed to maintaining single-sex education in the Junior and Middle schools. Responding to the increasing knowledge of the needs of Middle School boys, CHA instituted what Keator, in his Headmaster’s Letter in the July 1973 *CHA News*, described as a “new approach for C.H.A. in grade 7.

“The purpose of the program is twofold: 1) to provide a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of *each* boy and subsequently to tailor the pace of the program to meet his needs, and 2) to provide a transition between the homeroom atmosphere of the sixth grade and the diversification of the teachers and subjects of the Senior School.” A three-man team – the 7<sup>th</sup> grade’s homeroom masters – worked together. They taught English, social studies, and math with the other subjects being taught by “outside teachers” during the day.

The Keator years were also a time when the school’s alumni and parents became more involved with the institution. Their events flourished.

As part of Homecoming in 1973, the school’s board decided to name its big gym in honor of Headmaster Emeritus Robert A. Kingsley n’65. Within a year the varsity baseball field honored William E. Shuttleworth n’38, a very popular and successful master at the school from 1926 to 1938, and the field west of Shuttleworth Field was named Wales/Charles Field in memory of long-time teachers and coaches Percy A. Wales n’64 and Daniel W. Charles n’66.

The school’s board voted on November 13, 1973, to name the soon-to-be-opened performing arts center in the school’s old Recreation Building

Baird Hall to honor the generosity of Frank B. Baird Jr. '21. Over the years Baird had given the school hundreds of thousands of dollars, much of it for the library or the arts. He would soon pledge \$1 million, the largest single gift in school history. This gift was designated for the science and math departments for equipment, books, and some physical improvements to the Kline Science Building.

As renovation of the Rec neared completion and the performing arts center's opening approached, Baird changed his mind about having the center named in his honor. His focus was on science now, he told the headmaster. He thought the Rec's name should celebrate someone with a closer attachment to the arts. As a result in May 1978 it was named for Albert B. Conkey n'66, who was retiring after 38 years as music teacher, coach, advisor, and the local community's "music man."

Other aspects of Keator's administration were less pleasant. The size of the faculty was reduced in order to help the school's finances. Some of the reductions were accomplished through attrition but some teachers' contracts were not renewed.

Academic requirements were raised. Marginal students were not retained. Admissions standards were tightened. Nevertheless, enrollment actually grew from 447 in 1972 to 460 in 1979.

A school's growth can also be measured by the financial support it receives. In the time that Keator led CHA, annual giving grew from \$28,200 in 1972 to \$68,933 in 1979. The number of donors increased from 655 in 1973 (the first year that statistic is available) to 1,112 in 1979.

During that same period a modest capital campaign to renovate the Rec raised close to \$250,000. In 1976 the Chestnut Hill Academy/Springside Foundation was created. Charles H. Woodward '21, being true to the promise he made to Nat Saltonstall a decade earlier, made the \$100,000 gift that inaugurated the foundation.

In 1977 plans were drawn up for a \$1 million capital funds drive. The curiously named Forward Thrust Campaign earmarked \$232,500 for physical improvements with the remaining money going to faculty salary

endowment. In 18 months the campaign raised \$1.652 million, substantially more than the original goal.

For many faculty members and administrators the Keator years were busy and intense. They were also, reportedly, fun. The Keators loved to entertain. There were several faculty and/or board parties held at Jennings House every year.

The people who mentioned the parties almost always talked about what became known as “Marnie’s Menagerie.” Jennings House, in addition to its five human inhabitants, was also home to four dogs, two cats, a goat, and a pony. The interplay among the guests and the pets was often hilarious.

At school there were also several events that lightened the load for the faculty while bringing enjoyment to students and parents. Late in the spring of 1974 the faculty produced Frank Loesser’s *How To Succeed in Business without Really Trying*. It was the second production in the newly renovated Rec and was a smash, although most of the faculty actors on stage were encouraged to keep their day jobs.

On November 1, 1974, alumni, faculty members, and parents joined forces to participate in a donkey basketball game in the Kingsley Gym. The headmaster and Director of Athletics Jim McGlinn were responsible for maintaining a pristine playing surface.

On October 10, 1978, Keator told the board that he had accepted the call to become headmaster at Pomfret School in Connecticut. With his announcement the search for his successor began.

His legacy included a stable financial institution. The students’ experience had expanded and improved. The faculty had been strengthened with the addition of, among many, Marty Baumberger, Pat Bradley, Joseph “Jody” Dobson, Bob Fles, Bill Gallagher, Joanna “Dodie” Carver Holland, Steve Hyson, Bill Kleinfelder ‘68, Ron Lanzalotti, Joanna Lewis, John Marcy, Stan Parker ‘68, and Margaret Ann Young. Faculty members, parents, students, and alumni were engaged and supportive of the school.

During the 15 years after Bob Kingsley retired CHA weathered societal and internal storms. It survived the Sixties and emerged a healthier, happier institution with a better image in the community. It was adapting



to a new philanthropic environment. The academic program continued to be strong. An efficient administration was in place.

CHA still faced challenges. The student body was smaller than expected. The endowment was lower than it was at many comparable schools. The buildings faced some long-overdue maintenance. New and upgraded art and athletic facilities were needed. Taking the academic program to the next level was also a priority.

Building on a strong foundation while addressing those issues would be the job for Keator's successors.



## Chapter 7

### Growth and tranquility: 1979-2002

Chestnut Hill Academy from 1965 to 1979 had its share of unrest and transition. As the 1980's approached, a more tranquil, but still vital, period began.

With Gerrit Keator's announcement that he would be leaving in June 1979, the search committee's priority was to find a headmaster who would build on the academic program he had put in place. Committee secretary Alice W. Harrison noted, "We also wanted to continue the kind of affirming morale building that Gerrit had done."

Their choice was Barnaby John Roberts, assistant headmaster at St. Stephen's School in Alexandria, Virginia.

Born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England in 1942, Roberts attended St. Edward's School in Oxford. He read history at Selwyn College, Cambridge, earning a B.A. with honours in 1964. A year at Barclay's Bank as a management trainee was followed by a year as an English teacher and soccer coach at St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia.

He returned to England where he worked towards his diploma in education at Oxford University's Trinity College. In 1967 he returned to the United States, again teaching and coaching at St. Christopher's, where he remained until 1970. In 1968 he married Betsy Mathewson.

In 1970 Roberts moved to St. Stephen's where he taught English and served at various times as assistant college counselor, development director, and assistant headmaster. Barnaby, Betsy, son Adam, 7, and daughter Amanda, 3, moved to Chestnut Hill July 1, 1979.

As a first step he set out to know the school, its traditions, and its students. Dean of Faculty Stan Parker '68 notes that Roberts took on many staff jobs, learning firsthand what it was like to hand out athletic equipment in the gym, answer phones on the switchboard, and wash dishes in the kitchen.

“After six months,” Roberts says, “We started to look at how kids and faculty members were doing.”

He discovered that while most of the boys were doing well, some were out of their depth academically. Neither the struggling student, who would be better served in another school, nor the school benefited.

Roberts, his division heads, and the faculty worked closely with the parents to make the transitions as smooth as possible. Many boys left CHA at the natural breaks between Junior and Middle Schools (after 5<sup>th</sup> grade) or between Middle and Senior Schools (after 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

To further strengthen the student body, the admissions program was tightened, the area from which students were recruited widened, and the academic requirements for attendance became more rigorous. Joseph P. “Jody” Dobson, then admissions director, says, “During the period from 1976 to 1993 the school became a harder place to get into.”

Having settled into his position, Roberts addressed the school community in the Spring 1981 *CHA News*. He noted that “CHA now enrolls students from the widest area since our years as a boarding school” with 58 different zip codes represented compared with 36 zip codes in 1970. He went on to comment on “the changing world around us” and urged openness to change while preserving “ideals that will never change.”

Having written that the school was serving its largest geographic area in years, Roberts was very receptive to the pleas of students – led by Paul Bocchini '82 and Owen Morris '83 – that CHA ditch its long-time monikers “Hillers” and “Big Blue” for a somewhat more menacing nickname. After almost a year of planning, CHA became the Blue Devils in 1982. A mascot costume was designed and the Hillers were now the Devils, much to the kids' delight and the headmaster's approval.

“With the change of the nickname from ‘The Hillers’ to ‘The Blue Devils,’” Roberts said, “CHA would be perceived as less a Chestnut Hill school and more a school serving a broad area,” which was the reality.

In his early years Roberts appointed new Junior and Middle Schools heads. Joan C. Frank followed retiring Margaret Ann Young in the Junior School. Faculty member Dobson replaced the Middle School's Thomas A. Northrup

H'81, who left to head the Hill School in Virginia. With Frank and Dobson in place, the two divisions continued to develop their programs. Both received positive reviews in the 1984 Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools (PAPAS) evaluation.

Roberts, by his own admission, was not as familiar with Junior School as he was with the other two divisions. Nevertheless, as former Junior School teacher Liz Schmid explains and Frank confirms, he took time to learn about that division's operations and took interest in and supported Frank during her years at the helm.

An informational brochure from the mid-'80s described the Junior School's program. Class by class, it explained how the school approached the first years, the "most important in a child's education. ... Skilled teachers and small classes provide each student individual attention and sufficient practice to master basic skills."

Frank reported to the board in March 1988 that the Junior School's strengths are "a structured environment with warmth and appreciation of individual effort; a program that allows for hands-on activities; an enriched curriculum; and an excellent early education pupil-teacher ratio."

Middle School educators are presented with unique challenges. As Dobson notes, "You start with the fact that there is no three- or four-year period in human development, other than right out of the womb, where there are more changes to a human being than there are between the ages of 11 to 14 or 15. It's an enormously cataclysmic time of change physiologically, physically, neurologically.

"To assume you can do the same things with or for a 6<sup>th</sup> grader that you can do for an 8<sup>th</sup> grader is to make as big a mistake as it is to say you can do the same thing with a one-year old as you can with a five-year old."

CHA dealt with these tumultuous Middle School years by having different approaches in the Middle School's three grades: 6<sup>th</sup> was a homeroom environment, similar to the Junior School program; 7<sup>th</sup> provided a "modified homeroom" – the "core program" established during Gerrit Keator's second year – with the boys leaving the homeroom for certain classes; and 8<sup>th</sup> grade had a homeroom base where English and social studies classes were taught, but the boys moved around the school for

the rest of their subjects, similar to what they would encounter in Senior School.

Once those boys reached Senior School, they were offered “a rigorous traditional, college-preparatory program.” In the last two years, after certain requirements were met, there were opportunities for course choices, advanced-level classes, and independent study. Participation in athletics, activities, and the arts was required.

Senior Schoolers would also gradually begin to share classrooms with girls from Springside School. The Coordinate Program, “rare in the entire country,” continued to grow during the Roberts years. While some may have thought that the United Kingdom had taken over the two Chestnut Hill schools when Roberts, a Brit, was hired in 1979, and Eleanor Kingsbury, a Scot, was chosen to lead Springside a year later, the schools’ character remained unchanged: two single-sex schools that worked together to give the older students what became known locally and, according to a Harvard report, nationally as “the best of both worlds.”

Technology was an increasing presence throughout the school. As early as 1981 the board noted that making students familiar with computers was a priority. By the spring of 1983 the *CHA News* described a computer curriculum that began with games in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It continued through to the upper grades where students could elect classes in Basic (a computer language) programming and a one-year course in structured language “to prepare for a new AP exam in computer science to start in the spring of 1984.”

The faculty was also being strengthened. Jody Dobson, remarking on the school’s improving academic reputation, observes that CHA became more competitive in attracting high-caliber teachers. In addition to Dobson’s promotion and Frank’s appointment, Roberts hired Jeff Clark, Ron Colston, Steve Coopersmith, Ann Dimond, Rob Ervin, Ralph Flood, Peggy Freeman, Janet Giovinazzo, Paul Hines, David Joy, Betsy Longstreth, John McArdle ’73, Susan MacBride, Bob Newman, Jack Plunkett, Frank Steel ’77, Eva Stehle R.N., Wes Winant, and Roland Woehr.

While each of these would play an important part in the school’s life going forward, one was especially significant.

In 1982 there was an opening in the history department. Alumnus and recent Yale graduate Frank Steel '77 – whose father, a member of the class of 1929, had taught at CHA from 1955 to 1977 – was looking for a job. His brother-in-law, CHA's athletic director Jim Talbot, suggested he apply. He did.

After the normal round of interviews, Roberts and Senior School Head Owen Boyer decided Steel was their choice. They needed to get in touch with him as quickly as possible; school would start soon and a decision had to be made.

Steel – both he and Roberts tell the story the same way – was playing tennis at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. Boyer and Roberts walked across Willow Grove Avenue and told Steel that they would like him to join the faculty. Steel's puckish reaction was, "Can't you see I'm busy?" Thrilled with the offer, he accepted it minutes later.

In addition to the academic improvements, the buildings also demanded attention. The roof, leaking like a sieve, caused the most concern, but its repair was delayed when a fire damaged the music wing on June 5, 1981. It was quickly controlled and no one was injured, but the wing would have to be completely rebuilt. That was accomplished within six months. An investigation later discovered that a student had set the fire.

Attention returned to the roof. Old roof tiles showed that it had originally been a deep red. For years it had been a dull grayish color, the result, former business manager Charles H. Landreth '29 reported, of being able to buy surplus gray paint inexpensively from the United States Navy after World War II ended.

It was agreed to bring the roof back to its original appearance. Completed in 1983, the result was stunning

In the Spring 1985 *CHA News* Roberts wrote about what the "new look" roof meant to the school. "My fellow Heads at other schools cannot understand my enthusiasm for a roof, and an expensive roof at that. But I see it as a sign to everybody who sees the school; a sign that says that the school is thriving and established, but also a sign that says the school is aware of its roots and is working to preserve its history and traditions."

In order to pay for the roof, a new fund raising campaign, The Campaign for Enduring Excellence, was launched. It would also help pay for renovations to the creative arts space and a Middle School which was “the least attractive and functional area of the school” where the students, at a time of “a testy period of adjustment, function in small classrooms that are not well placed. In the words of Headmaster Roberts, ‘the Middle School area must have been the section of the less expensive rooms in the Inn.’” An additional \$1 million would be designated for endowment.

The Campaign exceeded its \$2.1 million goal in less than a year.

Another physical improvement was the result of a tragic accident. In the winter of 1988 student Andrew Bender was seriously injured on a skiing trip, leaving him paralyzed. The injury led to the school becoming handicap accessible, including the installation of an elevator, which was in place early in the next school year.

Amid the ongoing efforts to provide a quality education and environment for the boys there was the distraction that Hollywood brought to CHA in the summer of 1987.

Alumnus Steven Kampmann '65, an actor, writer, and director living in Los Angeles, had made a national name for himself as Kirk Devane on CBS' *Bob Newhart Show*.

Kampmann and Will Aldis wrote the screenplay for *Stealing Home*. The movie stars Mark Harmon (with CHA's Thacher Goodwin as the Harmon character's younger version), Blair Brown, Jonathan Silverman, and Jodie Foster. Much of it takes place at the fictional Carlton Academy. Kampmann worked with CHA so that the film could be made in Chestnut Hill and use not only the CHA campus and its buildings but also some of its students and faculty as extras.

Even though it occurred when school was out, there were times when the filming needs and those of the school came into conflict. Roberts reported to the board in October 1987 that he was “happy to speak of the filming of the movie *Stealing Home* ... in the past tense.” A year later he had mellowed: “In the long run, I'm glad we did it. The experience of the boys was the best part of it.” As for the hassles: “Everybody goes along with them because movies are fun.”

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In addition to Roberts' focus on academics, tending the building, and accommodating the entertainment business, it was on his watch that the Chestnut Hill Academy archives was established; ice hockey was dropped as a varsity sport because of costs and – this is true – lack of a goalie; and CHA formed, with some neighboring schools, the Independence Football League in which CHA would soon win a string of championships.

Roberts announced in September 1989 that he was resigning to become headmaster of Oklahoma City's Casady School July 1, 1990.

Earl J. Ball, headmaster at the William Penn Charter School from 1976 until his retirement in 2007, has a unique perspective on his neighboring friendly rival.

"I see Barnaby," Ball says, "as key to the Chestnut Hill Academy we know [today]. He was focused on the total school. He was clearly focused on making the educational program as strong as it could be."

As soon as Roberts announced his plans, the search for his successor began. Coincidentally Eleanor Kingsbury also announced her resignation. With both CHA and Springside needing new leadership, there was some thought that the two schools might join together and look for one person to head both schools. That idea, clearly ahead of its time, was quickly dropped.

CHA's search was concluded on April 18, 1990, when Richard L. Parker – assistant headmaster and dean of students at the Proctor Academy in Andover, New Hampshire – was selected to be the school's new headmaster.

Born in Connecticut in 1954, he attended Greenwich Country Day School, graduating from Suffield Academy in 1972. After earning B.A.s in English and religious studies at Middlebury College in February 1977, he began teaching at Proctor that fall.

He taught English and religion and coached ice hockey, skiing, bicycling, and rock climbing. Several years in various administrative roles led him, in 1983, to the positions he held when he was tapped to lead CHA seven years later.

Married to Philadelphian Laurie Smith and father of daughters Story and Ellie, the Parkers moved to Chestnut Hill July 1, 1990. In an interview shortly after he arrived at CHA he told *The Chestnut Hill Local*: "I think that kids today are being bombarded by a lot of mixed messages coming from television and movies and politicians and, probably, educators. I really want to fight for traditional values."

One of Parker's goals was to make the school more diverse. While diversity had been a priority since Nat Saltonstall was headmaster in the 1960s, Parker gave it renewed emphasis.

Soon after he began, he announced in the Spring/Summer 1991 *CHA News* that the school would undertake a Multi-Cultural Assessment Plan. A Northwest Neighborhood Scholarship Program for students of color in grades four through seven was established. In August 1993 a grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest Fund to increase students and faculty of color through a collaborative venture with Springside was announced. A parent forum on multiculturalism followed in November.

In addition to seeking to develop a more heterogeneous student body, he wanted to similarly affect the curriculum "to acknowledge voices that had previously been excluded or neglected: voices from historians and authors of color and from women. One of the great things about the Coordinate Program [is] that students were able to benefit from Springside's attention to female authors."

Another element in increasing diversity was attracting families that previously had no independent school experience. To that end he decided, not without controversy, to eliminate any reference to Forms I to VI, the traditional designation of 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

"In the '60s, '70s, and '80s," Parker says, reflecting on his 1993 decision, "independent schools really worked hard to bring new people in." The use of traditional private school designations "seemed elitist and were unfamiliar to many prospective families." Educational consultants recommended the change and Parker made it. Many alumni were miffed but the headmaster says "it was a relatively easy thing in my mind to give up a little tradition to gain clarity for people considering independent schools for the first time."

In order to be consistent with Springside, he also changed the designations of the three divisions from “Junior, Middle, and Senior” to “Lower, Middle, and Upper.”

At the very beginning of his stewardship, Parker made long-range planning a priority. With a mission statement in place by the summer of 1992, the plan was completed in 1993. It's goals were listed as: (1) Evaluating and improving curriculum, teaching techniques, and use of technology; (2) increasing diversity of student, faculty, board, and administration; (3) raising additional non-tuition revenue; (4) providing competitive faculty compensation; (5) maintaining the plant and providing additional facilities; (6) supporting relations with alumni and the community at large.

The school was mindful of the need to stay current with the quickly advancing field of computer use. By the 1996-1997 school year it was reported that a technology committee was “aggressively improving educational technology” through additions of hardware, software, and training. Computers became commonplace in the classrooms as aids for teachers in preparing lessons and dealing with what Peter G. Randall '69, then the school's director of information systems and technology, calls “administrivia:” writing reports; preparing tests; and communicating with colleagues, parents, and students.

Also in 1996 the CHA2020 campaign was launched with a \$5 million goal to be used for a new art wing, completed in 2000; expanding the Junior School's Balis Library, realized in 1997; and adding \$1 million to the endowment. CHA2020 raised close to \$5.5 million. It became the third consecutive capital campaign to exceed its goal.

The year after the CHA2020 campaign closed, another \$5.5 million was raised: \$4 million for building and athletic field improvements (basically deferred maintenance); \$1 million for faculty salary support; and the remainder to endow maintenance of the Wissahickon Inn and athletic fields.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, planning and capital fundraising had become ongoing efforts, no longer the occasional, project-specific programs they had previously been.

Parker's tenure was marked by a major milestone in CHA's history. In 1998, the school held a yearlong celebration commemorating 100 years in the Wissahickon Inn. A special edition of the *CHA News*, tours of and displays about the Inn's history, and a gala dinner highlighted the year.

Robert Chambers '67, who was board chairman from 1993 to 1998, recalls that Parker, while headmaster, was also pursuing a doctorate in education. It was completed in 1998 with a dissertation on art and music education in an all-boys school. Although there is nothing to suggest that it resulted in any changes to the school's curriculum, his dissertation, and many articles he wrote about his findings in the *CHA News*, reinforced his belief about the important role the arts play in a boy's education.

Wanting to return to teaching fulltime, Parker informed the board that he would be leaving CHA at the end of the 2001-2002 school year.

As he was ending his tenure, CHA still had a wish list: a new commons/dining room, new athletic facilities, and a new science building. However, an unexpected opportunity for an exciting project suddenly presented itself.

Springside, having committed to building a new Upper School wing, needed temporary housing for its students while the construction was underway. After considering several alternatives, Springside and CHA decided to renovate the Inn's long-unused third floor.

Initially the renovated space – realized in an amazingly short five months – became the temporary home of Springside's Upper School in the fall of 2002. After the girls moved into their new quarters, CHA decided to use the renovated space as home for its Middle School.

The schools decided to pay for the renovations with almost \$1 million from the Chestnut Hill Academy/Springside Foundation. This was the second major project funded by the foundation, which had been established in 1976 by long-term benefactor Charles Woodward '21. The first was wiring the two campuses during the 1995-1996 school year for the blossoming technology.

As the third floor renovations began, Parker prepared to leave.

Admittedly “an introvert and a very private person,” all agree that his time was one of tremendous advances at the school, not only in terms of the physical plant but also in enrollment and in the amount of money raised each year by annual giving, two prime indicators of the confidence parents and other constituents have in the school.

In Parker’s last year, enrollment stood at 557, almost 14 percent higher than the 489 in school when he arrived in 1990.

During that same period, unrestricted annual giving rose from \$187,068 to \$476,896, an astounding 155 percent increase during a time when close to \$12 million was also raised in capital funds.

Parker remembers his headmastership as “sunny times. When I recall my time at CHA, I am extraordinarily grateful for the outstanding work of the faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, parents, students, and supporters. Whatever success people attribute to these years, it is crucial to know that this was a team effort from start to finish. Schools are communities, and it was an honor to be this one’s leader from 1990-2002.”

The world-changing events of September 11 took place just as his final year as headmaster began. During that year, as the search committee worked to find Parker’s successor, there was an optimism about CHA’s future that not even the aftermath of the terrorist attacks could dampen.



## Chapter 8

### A school for the future: 2002-

When Richard Parker announced his intention to leave Chestnut Hill Academy after the 2001-2002 school year so he could return to teaching, little did anyone imagine that the next headmaster would preside over the most eventful decade in the school's history.

Francis P. Steel Jr. '77, the assistant headmaster, immediately made it known that he was interested in succeeding Parker. The search committee considered the benefits of promoting from within or conducting a national search. On the consultant's recommendation, Steel was given the opportunity to make his case.

He did. Steel, the first CHA graduate to assume the school's top job (Charles Platt Jr. '21, headmaster from 1939 to 1942, was an alumnus but not a graduate), was chosen October 11, 2001.

The school is in Steel's blood. His father, Frank Steel Sr. '29, taught in the Junior School for 22 years. Young Frankie, born in 1959, joined the four-year-old Kindergarten in 1963. A fine student and athlete, Steel graduated in 1977, the same year his father retired.

After CHA he went to Yale, graduating in 1981 with a B.A. in American Studies. After a year off, he began teaching at CHA. In 1989 he earned an M.A. in history at the University of Pennsylvania.

During his time on the faculty he primarily taught United States history while also offering courses in economics and psychology. Over the years he coached soccer, ice hockey, squash, baseball, golf, and tennis. He led the tennis squad to six Inter-Academic League championships.

When Owen Boyer ended his 20-year tenure as Upper School head in 1992, Steel succeeded him, adding the assistant headmastership to his résumé in 2000.

Already part of the administration, the headmaster-designate was able to oversee the planning for the renovations to the Wissahickon Inn's third floor as temporary housing for Springside's Upper School while its new wing was being built.

When Parker officially passed Steel the torch on July 1, 2002, the school was thriving.

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The years following Steel's move into Jennings House with wife, Betsy, daughter Hadley, and son Penn would present opportunities and challenges unexpected when he was appointed.

Steel began his tenure with the goal of improving CHA's understanding of how best to educate boys and also of developing and implementing a strategic plan.

To improve the school's approach to educating boys, CHA joined with other schools committed to, in Steel's words, "working together to understand what's working in our schools, the issues that we're facing, the common themes." His commitment to boys education has been enthusiastic and ongoing.

The strategic plan had, Steel reported, "Three legs. The first is program and culture where we're looking at everything that has to do with daily school life, from academic program to facilities to faculty compensation.

"The second leg is communication and service ... we want to make sure that what we're doing is communicating as well as possible. The service part reflects the idea of enhancing and raising the level of professionalism all around.

"The last area is financial strength."

Growing out of that strategic plan was a list of the school's physical priorities: a new dining/commons room, new athletic facilities, and a new science/technology center.

Two months into Steel's first year as headmaster an off-campus incident occurred that led to the expulsion of a 12<sup>th</sup> grader, a decision that caused the boy's parents to sue the school. Steel had to weather a storm of media attention. He was both supported and criticized.

Steel reflected on that experience in an interview in the Winter 2004 *CHA News*:

I learned a lot about being a headmaster from that event. ... A true crisis ... is a ... significant experience for the school and for the head.

While certainly there were various opinions on what happened, for the most part I was tremendously comforted by the amount of positive feedback about what this meant for the school and how people felt about my leadership.

It was definitely not something you would choose to go through but ... I feel very good about how this school and how the administrative team worked with me to bring the school through a tough time.



Elsewhere the school was continuing to plan for its future. The third floor space vacated by Springside in 2004 allowed the Middle School to relocate to new and improved quarters, in turn creating additional space for the Lower and Upper Schools. Eventually the previously cramped and nomadic archives would find a spacious home on the third floor.

The school's growth precipitated the implementation of the strategic plan's proposed physical changes. Enrollment was 532 in 2002 and 551 a year later. The dining room and gyms were bursting at the seams. Something needed to be done.

The final decision, taking into account the requirements of the historically certified campus, was to expand the commons/dining room and raze the old Woodward Gymnasium and replace it with a new one, also named for the Woodwards. That work was completed in 2006.

Construction to replace the aging and decrepit Kline Science Building began almost immediately. The Rorer Center for Science and Technology opened in 2008. In keeping with the school's commitment to having as green a campus as possible, the Rorer Center includes many environmentally friendly elements. It was LEED (Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design) certified gold, a major recognition and the first Philadelphia-area school building to be so honored.

The solid and growing enrollment CHA enjoyed during the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first few years also allowed the school to add two sports to its lineup.

Ice hockey, which had been a varsity sport from 1976 to 1984, was reinstated in 2004. Lacrosse, discussed since the 1970s, also joined the school's athletic offerings that year. It had never been added because of concern it might draw players from the other spring sports. By 2003 CHA was large enough to accommodate the new sport, which was projected to be an asset when recruiting boys to the school.

In 2006, the board's athletic committee examined returning the football team to the Inter-Academic League. Football hadn't played an Inter-Ac schedule since 1972 when the team's season was suspended after injuries decimated an already tiny squad.

CHA's 20-year domination of the Independence Football League led many to believe that the time had come to rejoin the Inter-Ac, which CHA did in 2006. It shared the league crown in 2009.

In the early years of Steel's administration CHA's academic program and curriculum felt the impact of the increasing role that computers and the Internet played in daily life, both in and out of school.

Computers had been around the school for decades, beginning, according to Ruth Parachini's centennial history, in 1961: "Chestnut Hill Academy boys have always liked to build things. They have always liked to found new clubs. As the academy began the celebration of its Centennial Year in February 1961, a group of Senior School students established a Computer (*sic*) Club. The purpose of the club members was to build a digital computer which could be used by mathematics and science classes."

Their results are not documented but computers, spelled the modern way, actually began to become a part of the school's programs in the late 1960s.

The lead article in the October 1969 *CHA News* reported "The computer age has come to C.H.A." Obtained through a Trustees Fellowship grant to physics instructor Steve Wales, it was expected that the "mechanical brain" would be used in science and math classes and for computing class averages. "It works this way: a student types his query on the teletype—or on tape which can be fed into it—which then transmits it instantaneously to the computer center [in Bala Cynwyd]. Answers come back via the same route in a matter of minutes. Much like the news Teletype, the machine prints the answers electronically on a paper role (*sic*) that moves through it automatically."

A Wang computer, bought in 1973, was housed in the math-science resource center. The faculty used it to demonstrate, to experiment, and to present material.

"Starting in the late '80s and early '90s we saw the advent of the computer lab as a destination for kids to work on projects of one kind or another," Peter Randall '69, the school's new chairman of Engineering and Robotics and former director of information systems and technology, explains.

Initially, Randall reports, the individual computers deployed to faculty members in the late 1990s "were not teaching tools. They were the facilitators of the adminstrivia of being a teacher. They were effective at that." It was when SMART Boards were installed in the classrooms in 2003 that the computer became a classroom tool for both teachers and students.

The over-arching question about new technology is: "Does the curriculum serve the computer or does the computer serve the curriculum?" The CHA faculty believes, Randall says, "[The] computer has resolved itself into the role of a pencil or pen. It's simply a tool the kids use to do their job."

Some of the ways that computers play a role in the classroom include:

- In the sciences, students can use computers in every lab because there's a wealth of probes. Students can simulate an electric circuit, for instance.
- In English, technology has made it easier for students who come across something unfamiliar in a text. They can go to the computer, put in a search term, and come up with information very quickly.
- In a history course about the 1960s, for example, students can view, thanks to YouTube, the 1960 Nixon/Kennedy debate or scenes from the Vietnam War.
- With Skype, fourth graders can connect with children at a school in Uganda.
- Students create and present multimedia presentations.
- Homework assignments, teachers' notes and commentary, and other resources are now available online, enabling students to access this information both during class and at home.
- In the arts, students can examine great paintings or listen to great performances without going to a museum or a concert. While they are still required to do that, the richness of the courses is enhanced by material from the Internet. Students can also use the computer to create art or compose music.

The availability of so much easily accessible information often requires teachers to change their approach. Patrick Hourigan, the director of educational technology, draws a sharp distinction between "a kid knowing something versus a kid knowing how to find out something." He gave the example of a student assigned to write a paper on the symbolism of the characters in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

"Twenty years ago that was an excellent assignment because in the process of doing the research you were going to learn about Soviet Russia, for example. There was a learning process that was part of the research and the research was part of the learning process.

"Now, with Google, you type in 'Symbolism in *Animal Farm*,' and you get a chart. [Students] don't have to figure anything out. So you ask different questions." As an example, the teacher might ask the student to read two different papers on the

book's symbolism and write about which he prefers, based on his reading and research.

In the lowest grades, the boys first learn how to use a computer and become familiar with the mouse, the keyboard, the monitor, and the printer. As they advance through Lower School computer usage becomes more and more integral to their classroom experiences. Middle Schoolers have access to computers and labs.

Now back to Parachini's point that CHA boys like to build things and form clubs: Since 2002 CHA has had a robotics program. In it students design and build robots that can perform tasks. The classroom courses include programming and introduction to engineering.

The Upper School robotics group competes annually in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) World Championships. In 2003 CHA placed 2<sup>nd</sup> out of about 1,500 schools. In 2009 they were 3<sup>rd</sup> out of about 2,500 competitors.

Throughout CHA's history, one issue has often defined a headmaster's tenure.

In 1897, James Patterson needed to find his growing school additional space, something he accomplished when CHA moved into the Wissahickon Inn.

Bob Kingsley's time focused on rebuilding the school after its Senior School was eliminated in 1942 as the result of financial woes created by the Great Depression and America's entry into World War II.

For Steel, it will likely be CHA's relationship with Springside. While this issue would reach an unexpected and some would say sudden resolution in 2010, the relationship between the two schools has actually been a subject of discussion and conjecture since 1948.

In the board minutes for April 17, 1948, there is the mention of the "possibility of an amalgamation of Chestnut Hill Academy with Springside School, the idea being to have a joint school with both boys and girls running from the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, and with the boys' school and the girls' school operated as separate institutions thereafter."

Nothing came of that idea, and there appears to have been no further consideration of joining forces until the mid 1950s when the schools launched a joint campaign to raise \$700,000 for Springside and \$300,000 for CHA. Springside's money was used to build its campus on Cherokee Street, a five-minute walk from CHA.

After Springside's 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades were relocated just down the street in 1957 (the rest of the school would move there in 1969), CHA and Springside had an informal relationship in the performing arts, with boys and girls from both schools joining for plays and concerts.

In the mid 1960s, discussions between the schools heated up, leading to the offering of two coordinate courses in 1966: art history taught by Elaine Weinstone at Springside and physics taught by Florence Kleckner at CHA.

In 1971, CHA's board president Tom Fleming '44 proposed "The formation of an Educational Consortium to be called 'The Chestnut Hill Schools' and [to] be composed of the Academy, Springside, and Stevens [School]." (Stevens was another girls' school in Chestnut Hill. It faced severe financial difficulties.)

His idea was that there would be one campus and one board. The proposal didn't gain much traction in large measure because CHA and Springside were happy with the coordinate relationship that already existed.

Later in 1971, Stevens came to CHA and Springside for help. It was planning to close and wanted to find a new home for its Senior School girls. In June 1972, CHA and Springside agreed to accept the Stevens girls into the coordinate program. The two schools shared their tuition and Springside managed their schedules and homeroom assignments.

Throughout the coordinate program's early years, there were times when CHA considered becoming co-ed, at least in the Senior School. It was concluded, as a January 24, 1972, board minute states, "If C.H.A. were to take girls into their Senior School at this time, it would split the community."

Over the next two decades, CHA and Springside found ways to refine their relationship. That relationship was given a huge boost in 1976 when Charles H. Woodward '21 gave \$100,000 to establish the Chestnut Hill Academy/Springside Foundation, adding impetus to those who believed that the more the two schools worked together the better it was for both.

From 1973 to 1975, CHA and Springside significantly expanded the scope and number of coordinate classes. Those courses were offered mostly to juniors and seniors, although some science and most arts courses were open to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

The two schools also actively promoted the coordinate program as part of their admissions efforts. In the early 1970s a joint public relations committee created identical brochures entitled *What It's Like to Go to an All-Boys School with Girls*

*(and vice versa)* for CHA and *What It's Like to Go to an All-Girls School with Boys (and vice versa)* for Springside.

As the cooperation between the two schools matured, the governing boards would invite representatives from the other school to participate in discussions about how the schools could improve their academic programs and their operational efficiency. Several joint board meetings were held in the 1990s and early 2000s. In 2006 the Springside and CHA board chairpersons became full members of the other school's board.

It was also at this time that the schools formed CHASS, described in the public announcement as "an agreement that strengthens an already solid partnership, one in which the schools retain their individual identities yet together create a whole that is more than the sum of their two impressive parts." The CHASS agreement created a foundation – the successor to the Chestnut Hill Academy/Springside Foundation founded in 1976 – designed to oversee all future partnership activities.

As that agreement took root, the two boards continued to discuss, individually and jointly, ways to create an even stronger academic program and a more efficient administrative structure. Their work became more urgent when the United States economy tanked in the 2008 recession.

Even before CHASS was adopted, maintenance, security, and purchasing were handled jointly. Admissions open houses and advertisements were coordinated. The crew teams rowed together. The Players had been a coordinate activity for more than two decades.

By the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, a consultant was on board to investigate the possibility of a CHA/Springside merger. Frank Steel noted that during the process, "There was a sense of frustration of year after year saying we should do more things together, agreeing that it's a really good idea, then the next year having the exact same conversation. There was a little bit of 'Are we actually going to do anything or not?'"

The first concrete step was merging the Upper School academic departments. That was a difficult undertaking because where there had been two department heads now there would be one. Its benefits, according to Steel, were "to have [the Middle and Upper School] curriculum be a much more streamlined and continuous program between the two schools."

These academic moves led the boards, in February 2010, to agree in principle to what has variously been called "an integration" or "a strategic partnership."

In a letter to the schools' constituents later that month, the two board chairmen and school heads announced, "We agree and have determined that our Lower and Middle Schools will remain single gender. ... We will be combining the two high schools over the next three years.

"In addition, we will also combine administrative positions as needed so that our families receive one message about program and our students begin to see both schools as their home."

The announcement also included the decision to form one board.

For many this announcement was totally unexpected and raised more questions than it answered about what the future would hold. While it said "we remain committed to retaining the traditions that we hold dear so they remain part of each home school experience," many doubted that could happen.

The reaction, as is typical for these kinds of changes, was mixed. Some were pleased and noted, "It's about time." Others felt that what had been working for more than four decades didn't need to be changed, just refined. Others were angry about the move and what it might mean in the years ahead.

As a result, Priscilla G. Sands, Ed.D., Springside's head of school, and Frank Steel held many meetings for parents and alumni to explain what was going on and to alleviate fears about what it all meant for their institution. Many of the ultimate details were, three years out, not known.

Evidence was, both heads said, that most parents and students shopping for independent high schools were looking for coeducational institutions.

For all the controversy surrounding the merger (the one word that for a long time neither school used), Sands says, "The real driver of this has been the children, the students and their education. Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed. If we are educating our students for our past and not their future we are going to miss the boat."

John McNiff, CHA's board chairman, says, "As the two schools do more together they'll be able to offer more for the kids. It's all about education.

"Unless we did something now," McNiff continues, "We'd be talking about this for the next 25 years. We know that this is the best thing in the long-term interest of the two schools."

Dick Hayne, Springside chairman, says, “We had to do this to remain competitive, not just on a financial basis but in terms of training the kids for what they’ll need to know for their future lives.”

On June 19, 2010, both boards approved a resolution that created one board for what has since been described as “one school, five divisions.” During the year that followed, the merged board and the administration worked on the details, with all knowing that even when the two Upper Schools become one in the fall of 2012 there would still be much to be ironed out.

Some decisions – like what existing traditions will be maintained, what new traditions will appear, whether there will be one graduation ceremony or two, and whether there will be one yearbook, to cite a few – will ultimately be made by the students.

Decisions about the use of the campus facilities; new building, if any; curriculum; and the consolidation of the non-academic departments like development, business, college counseling, and admissions will be made by the faculty, administration, and board.

What is already decided, effective July 1, 2011, is the school’s name and top administrative structure. “Springside Chestnut Hill Academy” (SCH) is the joint institution’s new name.

Under the new administrative structure, Sands serves as the SCH president “in order,” a letter to the constituents reports, “to better streamline the new, more singular administration. Concurrently, under the leadership of Priscilla, Frank Steel will assume the role of Head of School of SCH, primarily overseeing day-to-day academic operations.”

The merged SCH will be a school of about 1,150 students on a 62-acre campus with 16 buildings, eight athletic fields (with two more off-site), eight tennis courts, and 10 squash courts.

While all the heavy lifting in preparation for the two schools’ merger was taking place, CHA was having a yearlong party to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Co-chaired by Melen Boothby and Laine Jacoby, the CHA sesquicentennial’s highlights included this history’s commissioning; the induction of the Chestnut Hill Academy Athletic Hall of Fame’s fourth class; the Players’ 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary production (a remounting of Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe’s *Brigadoon*, the first musical the Players ever produced, in 1961 as part of CHA’s centennial); composition of a new musical piece, CHA Music Department Chairman Roland Woehr H’07’s setting of the 150<sup>th</sup> Psalm, *Laudate Dominum*; and – with the help



of alumnus Michael Strange '76, president of Bassetts Ice Cream – the creation of a special ice cream flavor, “Devil’s Delight,” made up of vanilla ice cream, caramel swirl, chocolate fudge, and light and dark blue M&Ms.

The largest event was the May gala. More than 800 people attended, including four of the five living headmasters, many board chairmen, trustees, current and former faculty members, parents and former parents, alumni, and friends of the school.

As the sesquicentennial celebration concluded, CHA embarked on the latest in a series of new beginnings.

Those beginnings were:

- 1851: Presbyterian minister Roger Owen and his brother, Joshua, opened a Chestnut Hill Academy designed “to afford facilities for acquiring a thorough ... education.” That institution seemed to disappear.
- 1861: Chestnut Hill Academy was incorporated. That incorporation has marked CHA’s “official” beginning.
- 1895: Chestnut Hill Academy was reincorporated. That, many believe, is the beginning of the school we know today.
- 1900: CHA moves into the Wissahickon Inn.
- 1934: The school drops its boarding department and becomes a country day school for boys.
- 1942: CHA eliminates its Senior School. Under new headmaster Bob Kingsley’s leadership the school immediately began to rebuild.
- 1956: For the first time in 14 years, CHA has a graduating class.
- 1966: CHA and neighboring Springside School initiate coordinate classes.

That’s eight beginnings. What makes CHA’s story so compelling is that even during the toughest times the school found the right people, made the right decisions, and always emerged stronger than it was before.

While many have said that the merger with Springside, a ninth new beginning, is the end of CHA as we know it, it needn’t be. The Wissahickon Inn, the dedicated faculty, the strong academic program, the loyal alumni body, and the remarkable history remain. They add up to a hopeful future.

CHA, while taking a different turn July 1, 2011, will continue in its latest incarnation. Its story is nowhere near concluded. To wrap up this history as Ruth Parachini did hers in 1961, that story is

“to be continued ...”

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