

William O'Connor

1/24/24

Grade 7

St. James School

Woodbridge in 1924-1949

Schools today are very different than they were in the time period of 1924 through 1949. A lot has changed in the school day and school environment all together. The classrooms had bulky furniture compared to today and the classrooms didn't have colorful decorations like we do today. When comparing Woodbridge Township Schools logo, that has changed from the 1900s to now, as well.

The furniture in classrooms is something that I find intriguing because today we have compact desks and chairs. There is a lot of space in the classroom, especially if we sit in pods or groups. Even if we sit in rows today, there is still plenty of space to work in groups in the classroom. The Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation website has a brochure titled, "School Days." In this brochure it shows a photo of a triple desk used at Woodbridge Academy from 1794. This desk was very large, but three people could have sat at the desk. Today, as a seventh grader, we have desks that only one student can sit at during a lesson, unless we are at long tables for art class or in the cafeteria. In my opinion, the desks from the late 1700s looked very uncomfortable. In my classroom today, we have comfortable chairs and we have flexible seating. Sometimes, my teacher lets us sit in her chair and we take turns throughout the day. I find it beneficial, since the chair is so comfortable. It helps me concentrate while I am doing my work. The structure of the classroom has also changed. Religious life were the teachers in the early school days. The brochure also mentioned that the schoolmasters were introduced on

salaries in later school years. Today, teachers are salaried workers and religious teachers are rare. At my school, we have one nun and the remainder of the faculty is lay men and women. Although there isn't a strong presence of religious teachers, we still practice our faith. My school is rooted with deep traditional, Gospel values and that is shown in everything we do. I think this has changed since the first school days and my chosen time period. Catholic schools today allow children, like myself, to practice our faith daily. We go to mass weekly with our class and I think this is important.

In addition to practicing our faith daily, we also celebrate holidays in my class. My teacher decorates the room and the hallway for each holiday. The February 18, 1944 edition of the *Carteret Press* has two headlines that show school today is similar to school in 1944. The two headlines in the edition are, "Valentine Celebrations Held for Three High School Groups" and "Students at Hale School Mark February Holidays." Both articles relate to my classroom today, because we celebrate President's Day and receive a day off. In addition, we celebrate Valentine's Day in the classroom by learning about St. Valentine and celebrating with our friends. Some school traditions are also similar to the early 1900s until now. The June 18, 1943 edition of the *Independent Leader* had an article titled, "Pt. Reading Diplomas Presented by Turner." The article spoke about how the superintendent presented the graduating class to William Turner, a member of the Board of Education. Today, at St. James, the principal and the 8th grade teacher present the graduating class to the parents and all family or friends in attendance. Certificates for the honor roll were also announced. At my school, students still can receive honors for their hard work. In the eighth grade, there is one valedictorian and one salutatorian. Students also receive honors cords for getting an overall A+ average.

Although life and education has drastically changed since the early/mid 1900s until now, some aspects of student life have stayed the same. Students in my school still wear a uniform. Our uniforms have changed over the years. Our interim principal, Mr. Bader, shared with my class that he used to wear a brown and yellow uniform. The pants were brown and the shirt was yellow. Today, we have khaki pants and blue polo shirts or white button down shirts with a tie. Students in public schools can wear clothes of their choice. The classroom structure has also changed. In the early school days, there was bulky furniture and the classrooms were filled with large student desks. Today, I have my own small desk that holds all my notebooks and workbooks. In addition to having notebooks, like students in the 1900s, I have access to technology. I can type something and the site will automatically save my work. I can research anything for a project right on my Chromebook and I can work with my friends on a shared document for an assignment. Technology has played an important role in the classroom environment today. My mom, a graduate of St. James, did not have access to technology the way I do today. Of course, the covid-19 pandemic changed the way for learning and technology became more prominent in the classroom. Before the pandemic, we used technology in the classroom, but not as much as I do today. I learned through the computer during the first few months of the pandemic. We could not have done this back in the 1900s.

In addition, after looking at past photos, the newspaper articles, and brochures, I have also noticed that the classrooms are more decorated and there is flexible seating. In the 1900s, there weren't many colorful decorations or posters. Teachers had chalkboards, whereas today my teacher uses a dry erase marker on a whiteboard. There are also lots of colorful decorations in my classroom. Playing sports is also something that has changed slightly. There used to be girl and boy teams for certain sports, but now my basketball team is co-ed. School days have changed

from the 1920s until now, but thanks to the advancements in technology and other aspects of life, my classmates and I were still able to learn during a global pandemic.

Works Cited

- Carteret Press.

<https://www.digifind-it.com/IDIViewer/web/viewer.html?file=/woodbridge/data/newspapers/CarteretPress/1944/1944-02-18.pdf>

- Independent Leader.

<https://www.digifind-it.com/IDIViewer/web/viewer.html?file=/woodbridge/data/newspapers/IndependentLeader/1943/1943-06-18.pdf>

- School Days Brochure - Historic Tours - Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Committee

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/5f0ec2fa-8eda-4b4f-bf46-916ffa9a98c5/downloads/Our14.pdf?ver=1701787224835>