

LOCATION - State-wide.

Submitted by - Eleanor Vansant

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Newark Academy

The Newark Academy stands on the corner of Academy and Main Streets in Newark Delaware. It is a large three story brick building. The porch sets up quite high from the ground and a number of frame steps lead up to the entrance. The small porch roof is supported by two Doric columns. On the top of the building (which is flat) sets a frame belfry.

The Academy was established in Newark in 1767. Previous to this Reverend Francis Alison, a Presbyterian Minister, from the north of Ireland and pastor of the Presbyterian Church in New London (10 miles north of Newark) established a school in the midst of his congregation in 1741. In 1743 the Synod of Philadelphia adapted this school for its own and sent to Europe to secure assistance to carry it on. Dr. Alison was rector of this academy until 1752 when he was appointed Vice-President and Professor of Moral Philosophy, in the Philadelphia Academy, now the University of Pennsylvania. He was succeeded at the academy by the Reverend Alexander McDowell, who removed it first to "Elk River" and 15 years later to Newark.

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Thomas and Richard Penn, proprietors of Pennsylvania and the lower counties again chartered the academy as an institution of learning in 1769.

It has generally been thought that the academy was closed during the Revolutionary War, but this is only partially correct. The proceedings of the Board of Trustees show that on October 16, 1783, the following resolution was passed: "The Trustees taking into consideration the meritorious conduct of Mr. William Thompson, the present teacher of the scholars in their academy, in undertaking that employment for near three years past, under many discouragements, and the small compensation he has had for his services, have unanimously agreed to allow him the sum of fifty pounds, as gratuity on that account, to be paid as soon as the same can be collected by the treasurer."

Thus during parts of the years 1776 and 1777, and 1780 and 1781, the academy was carried on. But it is undoubtedly true that for two or three years during the struggle, probably, between the years 1777 and 1781, the academy building was used for the manufacturing of shoes for the Continental army under General George Washington. Unfortunately the minutes of the Board of Trustees kept before and during the war were lost during that struggle.

The business of the academy was somewhat interrupted during the years of the war.

After the war the trustees resolved to carry it on as extensively as their circumstances would admit. Mr. William Thompson was appointed principal and served until 1794, when he resigned and a Mr. Johnston was appointed in his place. From this date until 1811, the school did not flourish, indeed part of the time was entirely closed.

In 1811 Reverend Andrew K. Russell was appointed principal. While he occupied this position, the academy greatly improved and the project of organising a college was formed, and to a great extent carried out. In 1834 the academy was merged into Delaware College, first known as Newark College, and a deed was made of the building by the Trustees of the Academy to the Trustees of Delaware College, January 15, 1847.

On May 4, 1869, the Trustees of Delaware College deeded back the building to the Trustees of Newark Academy. The Academy reopened and carried on under trustees of its own.

In 1873, Miss Hannah Chamberlain was elected principal and for the first time it was decided to admit girls. In 1877, Reverend J. L. Polk was appointed principal, and during his administration, the affairs of the academy prospered in the most satisfactory manner.

Then in 1835, Professor Albert H. Raub was principal and he met with marked success in his plan of conducting the school and ranked very high as an institution of learning (1838).

The academy continued to operate as an independent academy until 1898 at which time it was used for the school children of the town of Newark and was continued as such until 1925 when the pupils of Newark entered a new school which accommodated all classes.

At present the academy is used for the Newark Town Library, a Health Clinic, the Boy Scouts of Newark and the American Legion of Newark.

The old Newark Academy is noteworthy in the development of this country, because it was one of the first institutions of learning founded. Many men, who played important parts in the affairs of the colonies and in the Revolutionary War, were educated here. Noteworthy of these are Thomas McKean and George Read of Delaware, and James Smith of Pennsylvania - all signers of the Declaration of Independence. A tablet with their names upon it was placed on the front of the building and is still there for anyone interested to see and read.

Bibliography

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