

Kingston Chronicles – Edition 3

In the last articles, we learned the historical and architectural aspects of the Seminary building and then explored the “secret life and lifestyle” of founder Edward Stevens Sanborn. It is said that Major Sanborn founded the school “as a token of his regard for his native town and his appreciation of the importance of education”. So, in this segment, we explore the education received from Sanborn Seminary.

Sanborn Seminary was never religiously affiliated, but there was a chapel in the Seminary Building. Elaine Gilman (1958), a student from Fremont, remembers as a freshmen reporting to the chapel every morning with all the other students, listening to the daily “sermon” or speech from the headmaster, the salute to the flag and a daily prayer. The school’s setting and atmosphere was pointed out as one of the primary factors that parents would spend \$15 per year for student’s tuition in the school’s study courses: classical literature and science. The school catalogue for 1896-97 describes the school: “It is located in the quiet and pleasant village of Kingston, New Hampshire. The health climate and freedom from temptation make this place especially desirable for the location of the school.”

1911 Seminary graduate Rosamond Stevens Jones returned to the Seminary as a teacher for “elocution” (today it might be called public speaking). She credits then Headmaster Dr. Z Willis Kemp for the respect teachers received from their students, saying, “It was a very respected environment and the school had an extremely good reputation because it had the finest teachers with very good qualifications.”

Several Alumni gathered for the 100th anniversary celebration in 1983, and talked of happy memories, close friends, respected teachers, and the school’s high standards which led to a great education. Marilyn Blake Bartlett (Class of 1948) said “Sanborn was the best school in the state during that time. It was ranked number one.” Classmate Dottie Light said “I got a lot out of school because I loved it. It had a personal touch back then. Everyone knew everyone and we did things together.” Another classmate, Judy Levis added: “We had more demands and higher standards. We would never have thought to come to class without our homework being done. It was much more disciplined.”

Don White, (1958) remembers he had a lot of fun, “but it was still in the age of discipline”. He remembers walking out of class in a mild protest which made the Trustees rescind a vote to drop football. “There was a lot of school spirit back then.” (History sometimes repeats itself for in 1990, the entire student body walked out of their classes and staged a “sit-in” to protest the teacher contract dispute for the then Sanborn Regional High School). Sandy Conant Herrick (1957) added, “There was a great deal of respect for the teachers. We weren’t distracted by TV and a lot of outside influences. Ed Sullivan, Elvis Presley and dances at the Town Hall were “in” back then. We were a close school and when there was something going on, the whole school would go to it.”

In 1964, a group of citizens investigated the possibility of a 4-town cooperative school district to include Newton, Kingston, Brentwood and Fremont. Fremont and Brentwood opposed the four town coop. The following year, Newton and Kingston did vote for a two town Cooperative District and the Seminary sold

the property to this newly formed district, resulting in today's Sanborn Regional School District. Before long, the school population grew and in the 70's those in attendance had double sessions to accommodate both the middle and the high schools. Jennifer Hayward of Fremont spent six years in double sessions before attending Penn State University. "I never felt then and I still do not feel that I was cheated by the double session arrangement. I had as many math, science, and social studies courses as my Penn classmates and a variety of English courses. Looking back on those six years, I am continually amazed by the quality and character of the many teachers who influenced my life and whose contributions helped to make my success at Penn possible. It was also due to the interest and enthusiasm of those former teachers from Sanborn that I had a strong desire to succeed: Disappointing those special teachers that put their faith in me was out of the question."

Although the Sanborn Regional High School has moved to its new location on Danville Road, and today includes students from Newton, Kingston and Fremont, its commitment to excellence has not waived. One of the District goals is to have SRHS become one of the top ten high schools in the state. The Seminary tradition continues.