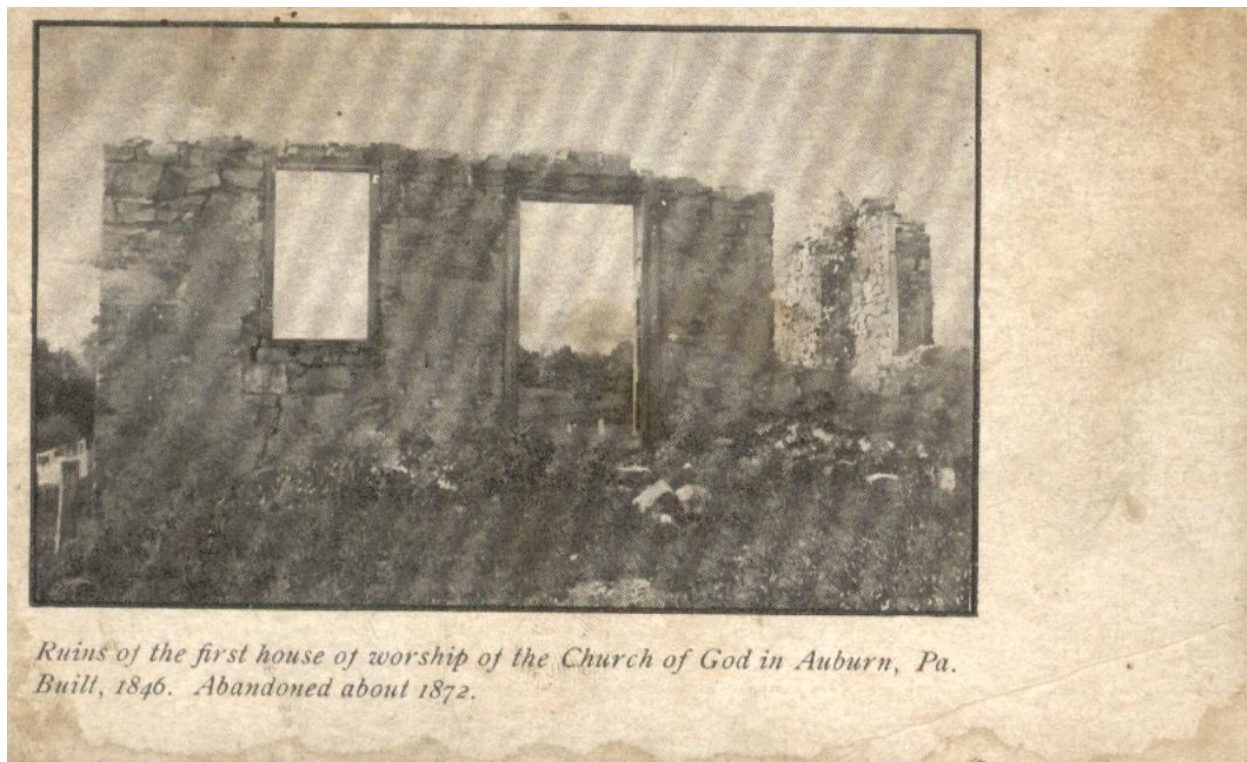


The History of Education in Auburn, Pennsylvania

The first public school to be organized within the immediate Auburn area was conducted in the basement of the Bethel Church which was located at the north-eastern corner of the cemetery on Mill Street. The year was believed to be either 1845 or 1846, several years prior to the official establishment of Auburn in 1857. The school was later transferred to the St. John's church located at the northern edge of Auburn in 1859. Regrettably, the Bethel Church building was abandoned around 1872 and fell into disrepair. The ruins of this historic structure were immortalized on a postcard before they were eventually razed from the site.

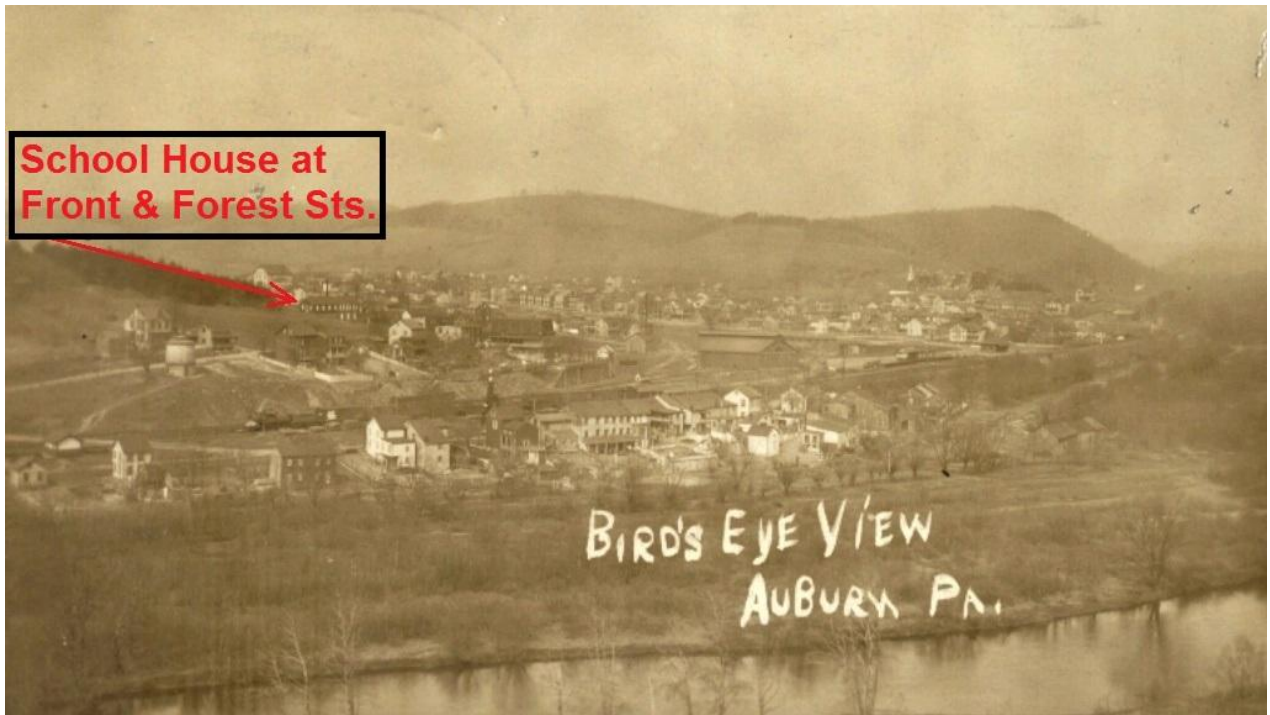


Picture postcard depicting the ruins of the Bethel Church/Church of God structure

Classes were held at the St. John's Church from 1859 until 1862, when a new two story brick building was constructed at the corner of First and Forest Streets for the purpose of having a dedicated structure as a school building. The building can be seen in a post card with a hand-written caption of "Bird's Eye View Auburn Pa." which is dated circa 1914. A red arrow has been superimposed upon the picture of this postcard to assist in the location of the school. St. John's Church continued its role as a religious meeting place and still serves the town of Auburn over 150 years later. An early postcard (circa 1906) depicting St. John's church has been included in this text.



Picture postcard by Frank Brown depicting an early view of the St. John's Church of Auburn



Panoramic picture postcard of Auburn including the school located at Front and Forest Streets



Portion of 1875 map depicting location of schoolhouse located at Front and Forest Streets

The first school board minutes on record were recorded on March 2, 1862. The original school board included Moses H. Hower, President; Daniel Koch, Treasurer and George A. Worcester, Tax Collector. Records from 1862 indicate that the school had two male teachers and no female teachers that year. The average teacher's salary was \$26.00 per month. Seventy-nine male "scholars" and fifty-two female "scholars" were enrolled. (It was common practice to refer to those children attending school as "scholars", not students.) The average daily attendance of these scholars was sixty-four males (81%) and thirty-nine females (75%). By 1865, the teacher's salaries reflected that the "Primary" teacher, a female, was paid \$20.00 per month and the male teacher received a salary of \$35.00 per month for a six month school year.



A class standing outside the schoolhouse located at Front and Forest Streets

On November 2, 1864 teachers were instructed to make proper inquiries about children who were reported to have contagious diseases such as “the itch”. (It is believed that the term “the itch” referred to Scabies, a common disease which was prevalent in the 1800s). In 1873, a smallpox epidemic swept across the nation and lasted for almost two years, killing tens of thousands of victims. On February 9, 1875 it was determined that the schools that had been stopped on account of smallpox should be recommenced on Wednesday, February 10.

On January 27, 1866 a disturbance was caused by brothers Jacob and John Schrader as a result of using profane language and making unnecessary remarks. The School Board voted to bring the brothers before the Justice of the Peace. On December 4, 1866, it was decided to charge a one dollar fee to anyone who should ask to hold an exhibition in the school building, excluding times when the event was to be “a free lecture given for the diffusion of knowledge and improvement of mind, in which case there will be no charge”. On February 13, 1871 a complaint against two boys was received. The school board agreed to give them one week trial (probation) and if no improvement, the boys are to be expelled.

On April 12, 1875 the band of Auburn was permitted to meet in the schoolhouse “until further action is taken by the board”. By September of the following year, it was determined that the band could use the school house to meet if they pay \$5.30 before they enter.

On October 9, 1875, it was determined that Grammar School should be opened (begun) by singing and praying and reading scripture and shall, if possible, by singing Doxology. (Doxology is a phrase used to praise God in Christianity, especially as a short hymn sung as part of a Christian worship service). The students in said school “must keep perfect order”.

On December 3, 1875 the school board ordered that there should be no more whippings in the schools. If the scholar did not obey orders from the teacher, they were to be sent home. In December of the following year, Abraham Kramer refused to obey the teacher and attempted to strike the teacher with a slate. He was suspended from school for one week. Notation was made that Harry Miller committed a similar offense and received similar punishment. In January of the following year, Albert Shollenberger and Henry Miller were suspended for leaving school without permission. Andrew Smith was also suspended as a result of his refusal to come to the front of his class when requested.

On March 26, 1877, a special meeting of the school board was conducted to discuss building a new school. On April 20, 1877, a determination was made to build a two story brick building with a tin roof and “modern improvements”. The building would be 28’ x 34’ (approximately 950 square feet) with access to the second floor via a stairwell from the first floor. In 1877, due to the new building program initiated, teachers’ salaries were reduced by ten percent. On June 6, 1878, the board was authorized to offer Mr. Gobin of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, the sum of \$300 for seven lots of twenty feet each located at the west end of Pine Street.



Portion of 1875 map depicting future location of proposed schoolhouse on Pine Street

A building contract bid of \$1500 for two story *wooden* structure was accepted by the board. A contract to haul sand to the site was given to Gideon Ebling at the rate of sixty-five cents per two-horse load. He hauled a total of 113 perches (approximately 2800 square feet) and was paid on September 23, 1878 a total of \$79.10. A perch by volume is 16 ½ feet long, eighteen inches high and twelve inches thick. A bid of forty cents a perch was awarded to Klingeman & W. Meck for the masonry work. A bid to provide a stove and heater fixtures was awarded to W. B. Leaser for \$80.00.

Over the next few years, taxes increased significantly to help offset the expense of the school. On August 5, 1878, during the period that the Pine Street school was under construction, school taxes were raised to assist with the construction costs. On December 31, 1882, an additional school tax of sixteen cents per cow was levied. On April 2 of the following year, a tax of forty cents per horse was levied.

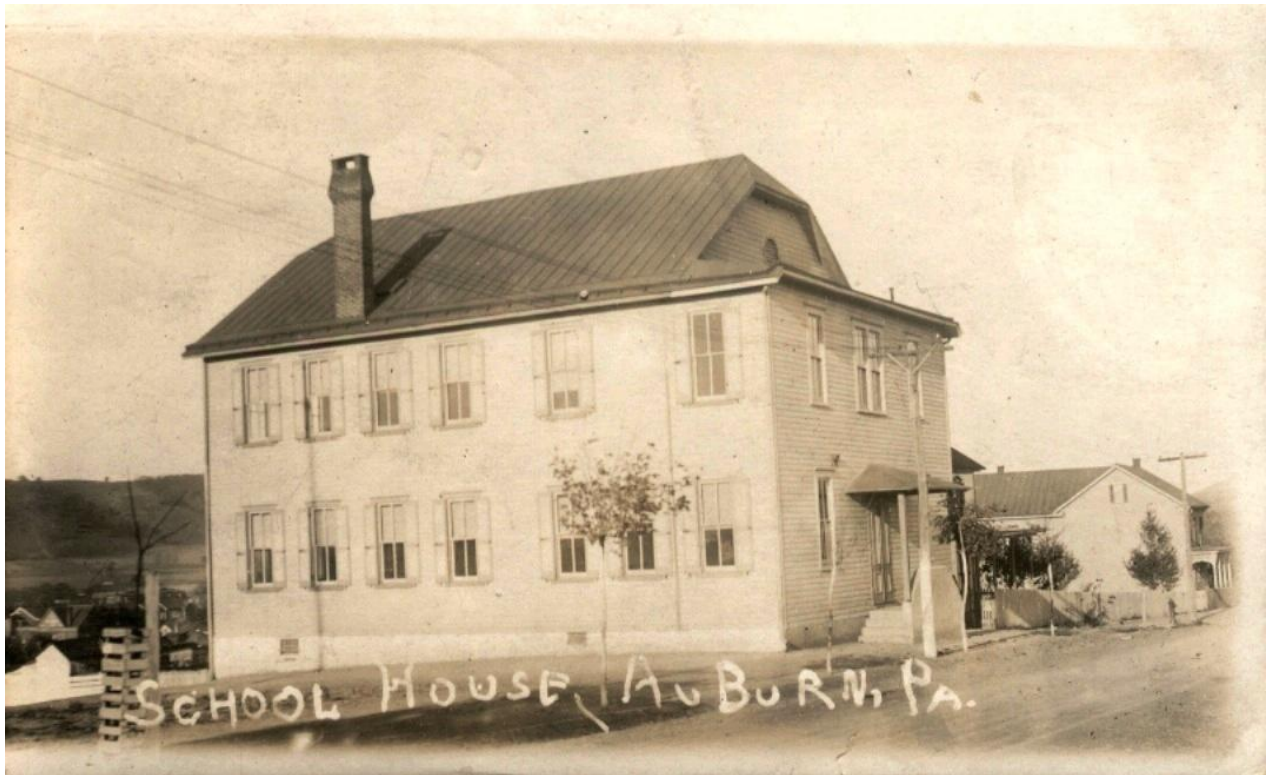


The "new" schoolhouse located on Pine Street



Early picture postcard featuring the "Auburn Grammer School Building"

This building was depicted in an early picture postcard with a hand-written caption of "AUBURN GRAMMER SCHOOL BUILDING AUBURN, PA.". Ironically, the self-taught entrepreneur who created this card misspelled the word "Grammar". Over the next fifty years, space restrictions would consistently plague the school system as classes grew larger, resulting in several additions to the initial building. The first of these was an addition attached directly to the front of the original building, resulting in increased square footage.



Picture Postcard showing the addition constructed to the front of the school building

Patriotism runs deep in Auburn, and this loyalty to our country was reflected not only by the massive flag which had been erected and flown over the school, but in the theme of parades, plays or programs involving the students. Many postcards depict various school children posing in patriotic gear while posing in front of a flag.



Flag pole and flag flying over the Pine Street School building



Four children posed in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House



Five children posed in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House



Twelve children posed in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House



Twelve children posed differently in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House



Twenty-one children posed in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House



Twenty-two children posed in front of U.S. Flag at Pine Street School House

In 1880, Willoughby Lutz received a salary of \$22.50 from the school system. Lutz's prior occupation had been that of a boat builder, but his position had been eliminated as a result of the Schuylkill Canal no longer being in operation. In December of 1883, the Auburn Literacy Society was permitted to make use of the old school building located at Front and Forest streets. This building later became a tie factory before it eventually was destroyed by fire. In 1890, a Miss Laura Moyer was the primary school teacher. At some point, the Pine Street School was supplemented by a quaint secondary building constructed beside the initial schoolhouse.

Patriotism wasn't the only form of pride these early students displayed. A highlight of each school year was having the opportunity to pose for a picture with their classmates in front of the school. Normally the children would wear their best outfits and have their faces freshly scrubbed and hair combed neatly in order to capture their best image on film.



Early picture of Pine Street School class



Class of 1903 picture taken outside of Pine Street School



Class posing outside of Pine Street School



Class posing outside of Pine Street School



Class posing outside of Pine Street School

The next attempt to increase classroom capacity involved building a secondary structure adjacent to the Pine Street School building on the west side. This quaint structure contained nicely painted shutters and multiple gables. The building served as additional classrooms for the Auburn school system until its unfortunate demise. On September 3rd, 1909, a student who had been severely reprimanded in school subsequently set fire to this secondary school structure in retaliation, destroying the building.



The next modification made to the exterior of the Pine Street Schoolhouse was the restructuring of the chimney cap located on the west side of the building. By comparing the postcard below to those previously shown, the difference in the chimney becomes apparent.



SCHOOL HOUSE, Auburn, Pa.

Postcard in which the chimney style has changed from its original design



Postcard view of west side of Pine Street School when decorated patriotically

The year of 1918 was one of promise. The Great War, later referred to as World War One, was coming to a close and our American troops would arrive home from overseas. Nobody paid much attention to a report of an unusual sickness mentioned earlier in the year by a Spanish wire service. "A strange form of disease of epidemic character has appeared in Madrid".

Within a period of just weeks, eight million people in Spain were ill with the disease referred to as "the Spanish influenza". As a result of military troop movements, the disease spread across Europe, the Mideast and Asia at an alarming rate. By the summer of 1918, the deadly scourge had reached the United States. In Pennsylvania, the epidemic struck in September. At first, only a few cases were reported, but then the statistics began increasing exponentially. Within a short time, over 75,000 cases were reported statewide. It was during this time frame that the epidemic reached the Auburn area and resulted in the local school being closed in an effort to control the spread of the deadly disease.

The disease began with a cough. The victim would then begin to experience steadily increasing pain in the ears and behind their eyes. Their heart rate, respiration and temperature would rapidly increase. In some cases, pneumonia would quickly follow. The pair of diseases caused inflammation and irritation to the lungs, causing them to fill with liquid. The patients would begin suffocating due to the fluid in their lungs and their bodies would turn a cyanotic blue-black.

The Auburn Brick Company donated an abandoned farm house on their property to be used as a "Pest House" in which to quarantine those afflicted with the highly contagious disease. Many residents of Auburn became ill with the influenza and a significant number of them died as a result of complications from the disease. In the city of Philadelphia, hundreds of people died every day from the disease and the influx of corpses became so great that large open wagons roamed the street, calling for people to "bring out" their dead. The bodies would be thrown onto the wagon like a carcass and taken to mass graves where they were quickly buried in a desperate attempt to prevent further spread of the disease. In many houses, parents became too sick to care for their children. People would hear the children crying out for help but pass quickly by rather than risk contracting the disease themselves. Others would selflessly care for any and all who were struck ill, risking their own health and lives to tend to those less fortunate. Many of those good Samaritans died from their efforts.

As quickly and mysteriously as the disease struck, it suddenly began to subside. Those who had been highly susceptible to the disease were dead. Many others suffered horribly from the symptoms but managed to survive. Once the epidemic had run its course, the "Pest House" of Auburn was abandoned and was burnt to the ground as a precaution. In less than six months, more than half of the world's population had been inflicted with the influenza. The Great War (World War One) resulted in the death of approximately fifteen million people over a four year period. Nearly twenty-two million people died within six months as result of complications to this pandemic. On November 8, 1918, upon the advice of Dr. L. C. Robinhold of Auburn that the influenza epidemic was eradicated, the decision was made to reopen the schools on November 11.

In 1926, a replacement "temporary" educational structure was positioned next to the Pine Street School. This pre-fabricated structure was assembled in sections and then bolted together on site. Several years later, the now abandoned building was disassembled, transported and reassembled at the northwest corner of Fourth Street and Liberty Alley by Melvin Long, a local painter who used the building as his workshop. This structure still exists today very similar to its original condition when built in 1926.

In 1931, an all new larger brick structure was constructed on the corner of Fifth and Pearson Streets to house all students. This was to be the final official school building located in Auburn. On November 13, 1934 Basketball was approved as a high school sport for boys and girls. All practices and games must be under supervision and all participants must have a signed permit from parents. In September of 1937, Home Economics was added to the school curriculum. In November of 1938, an Honor Roll system was established with the criteria that Distinguished Honor Roll required A's in all major subjects and standard Honor Roll requiring B's or higher in all major subjects. In September of 1940, the community presented to the school a donation of auditorium seating.

World War II also had an impact upon the school system with notations that in February of 1943 the school was granted for registration of War Ration Book Number Two. In 1943, Mr. Jacks, Mr. Fred Krauss, Mr. Forney and Mr. Thompson entered into the Army and Mr. Springer went into the Navy. In March of 1944, PFC Anna Kemmerling, a WAC, was granted a diploma to be given at the 1944 commencement on the basis of credits earned and approved by her Commanding Officer and the County Superintendent.

In 1947, the graduating class of 1947 presented clocks for each classroom as their graduation gift to the school. Also in that year, an attempt was made to start an Alumni Association and a Home Economics Club was started. In August of 1950, the Veterans of Foreign Wars asked permission of the school board to equip a cafeteria in the basement as a donation to the school. Permission was granted and Mrs. Mary Baum was the first cook for the school. Also in that year, teachers were required to take a "loyalty oath". In August of 1954, an Intercom system was given to the school as a graduation gift from the class of 1954. In that same year, over two hundred and fifty residents petitioned the school board to establish a Kindergarten. The request was tabled with the School Board contacting the Fire Company to determine if a room would be made available for the Kindergarten class. In 1956, Donna Scheipe won the cherry pie contest and went to Erie to compete accompanied by Miss Fitts as a chaperone. The Parent Teacher Association also presented new drapes for the auditorium since the old drapes were falling apart (according to the author's recorded comment). In 1957, the last senior class graduated from the Auburn High School. Future senior classes attended and graduated from Blue Mountain High School. On December 26, 1983 the school building at Fifth and Pearson Streets caught fire and was severely damaged as a result. A decision was made not to rebuild and students were incorporated into the Blue Mountain School System. The ruins of the building were razed and eventually the present Auburn Borough Building was constructed on this site.

Credit for the information and/or pictures contained within this text go to numerous parties, but the primary contributors were Auburn Area Historical Society Lifetime Members Harry Fisher and Dan Kerschner, without whom this text would not have been possible.