



From the Beginning

From Easton's inception in 1845, the hardy New England farmers who made up the vast majority of its residents in the second half of the nineteenth century were a frugal bunch. The town's entire central government consisted of three selectmen, a town clerk, and a collector of the taxes; and all five of those positions were essentially part-time for the better part of the first hundred years of the town's existence.

Compensation was meager, a small stipend was paid to each selectman, transaction-based fees rewarded the work of the town clerk, and the tax collector earned his keep from a commission paid out of the taxes he gathered. For many of those years the town's only regularly paid employees were its schoolteachers.

At the peak, there were 13 school districts, several of which were split districts with the towns of Redding, Weston, and Fairfield. Public education stopped at the eighth grade. Those families that wished a higher level of learning for their children had to enroll them in private academies and boarding schools.

Any suggestion of a public high school would have been pure folly in the nineteenth

century. There was neither the money nor the will of the people to get it past the voters. Taxpayer-funded high schooling wouldn't commence in Easton until the early part of the twentieth century when motorized transportation would make it feasible to transport students the long distances that would be required to reach towns such as Bridgeport and Fairfield, where the public high schools were willing to accept students from rural communities like Easton and Trumbull for a fee. This went on for nearly half a century.

By the early 1950s, the first wave of baby boomers was in elementary school. Easton's population had increased by over 70% between 1940 and 1950, and there were no signs of slowing growth as developers continued to put in new roads and build more houses. Easton was no longer just a farming community with little need nor much concern for higher education.

With a growing white-collar work force that mostly commuted to jobs outside of town, parents began to see the need for a high school closer to home. Many of the parents who settled in Easton had moved from Bridgeport, a city that was just beginning to experience a downward spiral as manufacturing jobs moved south, unemployment and poverty increased, and crime was on the uptick. The last thing they wanted to do was to send their teen-aged children back into that city to attend high school.

Redding was facing a similar problem. Most of their children were being bused to Danbury to attend high school there. Danbury was then taking students from Redding, New Fairfield, and Brookfield as well as serving its own growing school-aged population. By the mid- 1950s its single high school on White Street was burgeoning, and double sessions were introduced to accommodate the increasingly large enrollment. Redding students were either leaving home in the darkness of dawn or returning after dusk.

It was time to act.

Neither Easton nor Redding felt they could support a high school on their own. In 1956, there were less than 200 students in each town of high school age. But in addition to needing a solution to educating the older children, both Easton's Samuel Staples Elementary School and Redding Elementary School were at full capacity. The best solution: a regional school that could accommodate grades 7 through 12.



March of 1959 aerial of the New Joel Barlow Junior & Senior High School under construction. It would be completed and in use by September of that year.

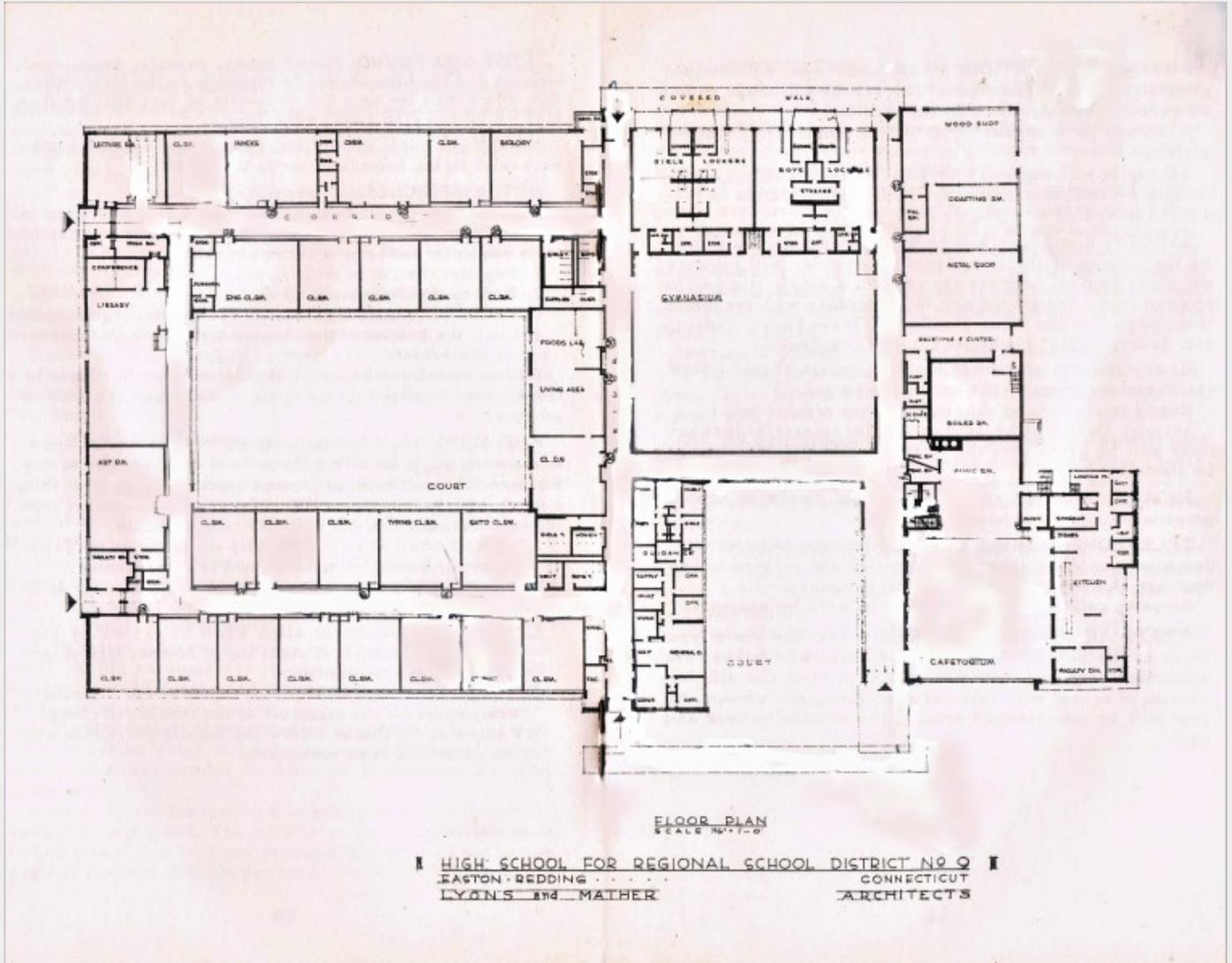
After two years of planning and discussion — and there was an extraordinary amount of discussion both within each town and between the civic leaders of both communities — a plan and final design was hammered out and then brought before the voters in the spring of 1958. The two towns would exercise their option on nearly 36 acres of farmland adjacent to Route 58 in Redding, about a mile north of the Easton border.

The land was nearly in the center of the combined community's geographic population, making transportation reasonable for everyone involved. The votes had barely been counted when the first excavators began work on the access road and the foundation for the new building. In less than 15 months, the new high school opened its doors for the fall semester of 1959.

The total cost was \$1,650,000. That included the land, all the construction costs, as well as every desk, chair, and other piece of equipment needed to run a first-class school. Initial enrollment in 1959 was approximately 550 students in grades 7 through 11, as the students who were in their senior year of high school in either Danbury or Bridgeport were allowed to finish their education in those towns. A total of 281 of the first students attending the new Joel Barlow Junior and Senior High School were from Easton.

The regional school had 19 regular class rooms, 4 rooms dedicated to teaching the sciences, 2 home economic rooms, 2 industrial arts rooms — 1 dedicated to woodworking and the other for working with metal, a mechanical drafting room, an art room, a music room behind the stage in the school's "cafetorium" - a combination cafeteria/auditorium, 2 rooms for business education, and a gymnasium with a folding wall to separate girls and boys gym classes during the school day. Also, a first for both Easton and Redding, there was a real, honest-to-goodness, Dewey Decimal Classification

library inside the school building - no more special trips to the Easton Public Library or the Mark Twain Library to do even the simplest of research tasks.



Original Floor Plan of the Joel Barlow Junior and Senior High School from 1959

The curriculum at the new school included 6 years of English and 4 of French, Latin, and Spanish; 6 years of mathematics; 2 years of general science; biology, chemistry, earth science, and physics; 6 years of social studies that included world history, U.S. history, geography, and current events; music, art, business education that included typing and bookkeeping; industrial arts that included carpentry, metal working, and drafting; and

physical education.

The day was broken into 7 periods on 4 days with 8 periods on the other day that included time for extracurricular activities. The school day started at 8:10 a.m. and dismissal came at 2:18 p.m., with the buses departing campus at 2:30. Initially, the gymnasium and auditorium were open to the townspeople for use whenever the school was not in session.

In 1959, the entire faculty consisted of 25 teachers, a principal and a single guidance counselor.

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL FACULTY

(Appointed as of April 15, 1959)

ROY B. BRIGGS, <i>Bates, N.Y.U.</i>	PRINCIPAL
WILLIAM BARRY, <i>Yale, Univ. of N. M., New Haven St. Teas.</i>	ENGLISH
M. DOLORES COPPOLELLA, <i>New Haven St. Teas.</i>	SCI. MATH
JOAN DONOFRIO, <i>Albertus Magnus</i>	MATH
W. CLOIS ENSOR, <i>Danbury St. Teas., Dana's Musical Inst.</i>	MUSIC
JOHN HALPIN, <i>Boston Univ.</i>	PHYS. ED.
JOHN HANRAHAN, <i>Boston College, Columbia</i>	HIST.
(MRS.) WESTLAKE HARPER, <i>Centre College, Yale, Fairfield Univ.</i>	SOC. ST.
JOYCE HIXSON, <i>U. of Conn., Trinity, Univ. of Autonoma of Guadalajara</i>	SPANISH
JOHN JENNINGS, <i>Wesleyan, Columbia</i>	HISTORY
(MRS.) BETTE JOHNSON, <i>Russell Sage, U. of Bridgeport</i>	FRENCH
ROBERT JOYCE, <i>Teas. College of Conn.</i>	IND. ARTS
IRENE LOFTUS, <i>Mass. Sch. of Art, U. of Conn.</i>	ART
GERALDINE LYNCH, <i>Danbury St. Teas., Columbia</i>	SOC. ST.
JEROME MAYER, <i>Fairfield U., Univ. of Rome</i>	LATIN
(MRS.) GRACE McDONALD, <i>Albertus Magnus, U. of Bridgeport</i>	MATH, SCI.
HENRY McQUADE, <i>U. of Conn., Danbury and New Haven St. Teas.</i>	MATH, SCI.
CLIFFORD MEAKER, <i>Hamilton</i>	ENGLISH
MARIE MILLER, <i>Boston Univ., Fairfield Univ.</i>	PHYS. ED.
H. OGDEN MORSE, <i>Dartmouth, Yale</i>	ENGLISH
CARL F. NIMTZ, <i>Worcester and Danbury St. Teas., Clark Univ.</i>	ENG., SOC. ST.
(MRS.) ELIZABETH PARRELLA, <i>Colo. St. Coll., Simmons, U. of Conn.</i>	HOME EC.
ROBERT E. ROTH, <i>Ohio Univ., U. of Tenn., N. Y. Univ.</i>	GUIDANCE
DAVID TRINKAUS, <i>Wesleyan, Yale</i>	MATH, SCI.
(MRS.) MARY WATERMAN, <i>Pembroke College, U. of Bridgeport</i>	MATH
PATRICK WHALEN, <i>New Haven St. Teas., Univ. of Ariz.</i>	ENGL., SOC. ST.
WILLIAM WRIGHT, <i>Univ. of Vermont, Boston Univ.</i>	SCI. MATH

Telephone: Regional High School, Easton — Enterprise 7600

Redding WE 8-2508

Please call after 2:30 P.M. except in emergency.

Opening Joel Barlow faculty and senior administrative staff for 1959

It's been 61 years since Joel Barlow began its first school day. The building, staff, and operating budget have grown exponentially since then, but the quality of the education has been outstanding since day one!