

The following was taken from The History of Rockville Centre
Public Schools by Floyd B. Watson

Miss Jennie E. Hewitt, who was to become one of the best loved and most highly respected people who ever served this school district, came to Rockville Centre in the fall of 1899, as an elementary teacher. She taught first grade.

The 1920's were a period of fast growth in the Rockville Centre Schools. In fact, in a seven year period the school population doubled. Although Morris, Riverside and the new SouthSide High School had all been built within the ten year period, 1915-25, elementary school facilities were again overcrowded. At the annual meeting held May 5, 1925 the purchase of a new school site at the corner of Hempstead and DeMott Avenues was approved 146 to 25. The site was 463 feet along Hempstead Avenue and 639 feet along DeMott Avenue, with a northern boundary 742 feet long and the western boundary 421 feet long. The property was purchased from Lillian H. Funk of Schenectady, New York.

On April 7, 1926, the whole community was saddened by the death of Jennie E. Hewitt, one of the most respected and beloved teachers who ever served this district. The high regard in which she was held is shown by the resolutions passed by the Board of Education and the PTA; the tablet placed in the Clinton Avenue School, by the Exchange Club (now the RVC Luncheon Club) and the fact that when the new school was erected at the site of Hempstead and DeMott Avenues, it was named in her honor.

The Exchange Club asked and received permission from the Board of Education to place a placque in the Clinton School which reads as follows:

"To the memory of Jennie E. Hewitt, who in this building gave devoted service as Principal of Clinton School for 28 years, 1898-1926 during which period the influence of her noble life was felt by the entire community.

When the Jennie E. Hewitt School was completed, the following dedicating placque was placed in the main entrance:

"This building is named in tribute to Jennie E. Hewitt under whose inobling influence as Principal of Clinton School 1898-1926, a multitude of boys and girls were molded to enrich the community as true men and women."

At a special meeting held January 11, 1927, a bond issue for the erection of a new building on the site acquired in 1925 at the corner of DeMott and Hempstead Avenues was presented to the public. It was approved 321-12.

On April 18th 1927, bids were found to be in excess of the bond issues authorized at the January 11th meeting. Another vote on May 20th, 1927 to vote an additional appropriation for the new school to be known as Jennie E. Hewitt School was carried 13-0.

Hewitt School was completed in the Fall of 1928. The three tennis courts were built on Hewitt play ground in 1929.

On December 6, 1932, the Board decided to take steps towards building an addition to Hewitt School. On October 17, 1933, another special district meeting was called to approve a bond issue to build an addition to Hewitt School. This proposition was approved 294-71.

On November 24, 1933, Mr. Huse Templeton Blanchard was engaged to draw plans for this addition. These plans called for the erection of a two story addition which was to extend Westerly from the circular Kindergarten room along DeMott Avenue. A gymnasium was also included in the plans. The addition was open for inspection on April 6, 1935.

Before the building was ready for school use, however, a small fire occurred on the second floor. A blow torch inadvertently came in contact with some crated furniture which ignited.

Although the fire resulted in damages estimated by the insurance companies of \$1,120.00, it did not seriously interfere with the opening of the classrooms for school use.

In 1935, under the auspices of the W.P.A., a portrait of Jennie E. Hewitt was prepared to be hung in the Hewitt School.

When schools opened in the fall of 1937. Wilson School could not be used at all due to the construction of their addition. All pupils from that school were transported by bus to "make shift" accommodations in Morris and Hewitt Schools.

In February 1950, the following plans were adopted to meet the crowded conditions at Wilson and Hewitt in the hope that it would prevent part-time classes during the following school year:

- a) Convert the Wilson lunchroom into a classroom.
- b) Convert the lunchroom at Hewitt into a classroom; take out the seats in the auditorium and make a classroom,

c) Take all pupils in grades K through the third grade who lived east of Long Beach Road and who were being carried to Wilson School by bus, and bring them to Hewitt School.

Mr. Clifford L. Grimm, who had served as principal of all the elementary schools from 1925-1934, and of Hewitt School since 1934, died January 19, 1953. Mrs. Amy Heisler, a teacher at Wilson School was appointed as his successor.

Mrs. Heisler served as principal until 1969, when she retired. Dr. David Long, who had been principal of both Watson and Riverside schools since 1965 became the principal of Hewitt School. Dr. Long remained principal until his retirement in 1988.

Respectfully submitted,

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