

Local Business Directory

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Courtesy photo

Back in the day — George Hanko, right, poses with his brother, Mike, at their home on Forrest Street in Gibbstown around the mid-1930s. The truck above is referenced in the article.

Fond memories/continued from page 6

Mr. Walker, who had been a captain in WWI, told George the only reason he failed the physical was because he had been born in enemy country. Mr. Walker said he would use his influence and get George into West Point.

George was too proud and wouldn't let anyone help him. Instead, he enlisted in the Army and headed to Pensacola, Fla., to be a flier. Once his physical qualities were recognized, he was scooted off to Hawaii where he became the running back for the Army football team that won the Pacific championship. He also boxed for the Pacific championship.

The Army promised George the chance to fly if he would sign up for another four years. When he wasn't given a chance, he bought his way out and headed back to New Jersey.

During the 1930s, my Uncle Mike Hanko had Joe Enos for a teacher. Mr. Enos graduated with George in 1928. Many times during class, he would reminisce about some feat George had

accomplished. He once took a little boat and left floodgates and went to Florida by the inland waterways.

The best story I heard about George was at my mother's funeral. Two ladies were talking about when they went to Camden with George in his truck. While in a store, a cop came in and said his truck was parked too far from the curb. The ladies said George went out and moved the truck with his bare hands.

So by growing up in Gibbstown and hearing all these stories about my Uncle George, you start to believe anything is possible. You might even start to believe a 0-9 track team could win a state championship.

And yes, this did happen in 1998 when the PHS boys track team won its only Group 1 state title with a 0-9 record. The star of the team was Jon Kalnas, who was also the star lineman of the PHS 63-game football winning streak. George Hanko was his grandmother's brother.

(Editor's note: Kalnas, PHS '74, lives in Gibbstown.)

PHS auditorium

Project uncovers architectural gem

By Dr. Walter Quint
Special to The Record Today

Now visible for the first time since 1965, a 31-foot by 31-foot chestnut skylight was revealed in the Paulsboro High School auditorium following the removal of a damaged suspended ceiling in June.

While dusty and dirty, the once central architectural feature in the auditorium was in nearly perfect condition when it was uncovered during an ongoing restoration project.

The project began in 2017 when a new roof was being installed on the auditorium. A severe rainstorm happened so suddenly that the roofers could not cover the portion of the auditorium where the roof had already been removed.

It literally rained in the auditorium, destroying the ceiling and damaging the plaster walls. As a result of the storm, the auditorium was placed out of service for nearly three years.

Thanks to a payment of nearly \$96,000 by the district's insurance company and a donation of \$155,000 from the estate of PHS alumnus Joan Mattson ('51), repairs to the auditorium began during June 2020.

When the skylight was uncovered, the Board of Education decided it should once again become the central feature of the beautiful PHS auditorium.

District architect Bob Garrison and contractor Bill Gross designed and installed the new ceiling and lighting to preserve this spectacular architectural feature.

The glass ceiling in the skylight was once exposed to the outside to allow the sun to illuminate the auditorium. Interestingly, a curtain con-

nected to ropes and pulleys was used to turn off the light when needed to darken the auditorium during a program. The glass ceiling was roofed over during the 1965 project.

The restored skylight is illuminated by four industrial LED fixtures controlled by dimmers, making it much easier to darken the auditorium. **Historical perspectives**
 The crest of the main entrance to PHS bears the date 1916. Memoirs 1920 (predecessor to the Pegasus yearbook) states, "In February (1917) we moved to our beautiful new school building ... our new surroundings were an incentive to better work."

The Class of 1917 moved to PHS during its senior year and became the first group of students to graduate from the new building that cost \$60,000.

By the late 1920s, PHS was too small to serve the needs of the growing student population and expanding curriculum. In response, the building was enlarged to include an auditorium, cafeteria, gymnasium and more classrooms.

This first expansion of PHS was dedicated in 1931. Amazingly, Paulsboro found a way to improve education in the midst of the stock market crash, the largest bank failure in the country's history, and food riots in New York – The Great Depression.

The school was again expanded and modernized again in 1965. To freshen up and improve the lighting in the auditorium, an acoustical tile ceiling and fluorescent lights were installed.

Fast forward

Today, the last two restoration projects include cleaning and fireproofing the cur-



Photo by Bill Gross

Undercover for 55 years — A skylight in the ceiling of the PHS auditorium was revealed earlier this year during a restoration project.

rent stage and replacing the 10-lighted wall sconces that add a touch of drama to the beautiful room.

It is worth noting that the stage curtain was replaced in the mid-1990s. The curtain was made from fabric remnant used in the restoration of Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

It was the highest quality of European velvet available at that time.

In preparation for its grand reopening in the future, the auditorium is currently being painted.

(Editor's note: Dr. Quint is currently serving as the interim superintendent of Paulsboro Public Schools.)

Names in the News



Courtesy photo

Congratulations to **Lex Franklin** of Gibbstown (center)

who graduated in May from Stockton University with a degree in Mathematics and will study higher education this fall after receiving a full scholarship to attend the University of Maryland in College Park.

Franklin is standing with Stockton president Harvey Kesselman, left, and assistant provost Tom Grites after being selected to receive the university's MLK Community Engagement Award in January.