

*Left: District No. 60, or the Wilson School, was built in 1892.*

## **Spring Lake Park School District 16**

# *Celebrating 50 Years of Excellence and Pride*

### **What is the origin of the current boundaries of School District 16?**

In June 1954, the Board of County Commissioners merged Common School District 47 (Spring Lake Park) with Common School District 60 (part of Fridley) and Common School District 6 (a portion of Blaine). District 60 or the one-room Wilson School had existed since 1892, was destroyed by fire in 1922, and rebuilt.

This newly merged area became known as District 47. (A District 47 had existed since 1883, when Chester A. Arthur was United States President.) This district's first school was located between Radisson Road and Highway 65.

### **How did local citizens create a long-awaited community high school?**

Shortly after creation of the new version of District 47 (1954), district voters approved a \$750,000 bond issue for a high school by a vote of 386-11.

Citizens again went to the polls to approve the (current) site. It won approval by a 457-1 vote and construction of the high school commenced in May 1955.

### **Before the creation of "School District 16," at what locations did this area's children attend school?**

Woodcrest (District 6), Blaine (District 47), Wilson (District 60), Anoka High School, Columbia Heights High School, and Minneapolis' Marshall High School and Jordan Junior High



*Students admire the courtyard area of the new, 1955 Spring Lake Park High School.*

### **There have been only four Superintendents of Schools. Do you know their names?**

Mr. Arnold Holz (Apr. 1955 - May 1956); Mr. Edward H. Knalson (July 1956 - June 1976); Dr. Chris L. Huber (July 1976 - June 1997). Dr. Don Helmstetter, (July 1997-present).

### **Was there another Woodcrest School?**

Yes. In 1923, residents living south of County Rd. J voted to form their own school district which became District 6. A school was erected and opened with an enrollment of 27 students.

The building (now a home) still exists today on the 7800 block of Van Buren. (Please don't gawk, it's not the Mary Tyler Moore house).

### **When did we officially become known as "School District 16?"**

School Board action on September 24, 1957 officially made the name and number Spring Lake Park Independent School District 16 following renumbering at the state level.

### **What early School Board member was most instrumental in organizing our school district?**

Kenneth Hall, namesake of one of our elementary schools

### **When did the new Spring Lake Park High School open?**

The new high school was not ready for occupancy in the fall of 1955 so grades 1-6 from Woodcrest were combined with Blaine School and elementary students attended school half-days utilizing split-shifts.

Woodcrest then became available to temporarily serve as the grades 7-11 junior-senior high school. In December 1955, the high school was ready and all students moved back to their rightful places and a normal school day.

The first year of the new junior-senior high school was, then, 1955-56. The high school's first principal was Mr. Harry Sheff.

The first senior class (totaling 55) did not graduate until the end of the 1956-57 school year.

**How did the high school obtain its name?**

Mrs. Allen Wicks won a contest in 1955 to name the school (not the district). Surprisingly, the name was and still is Spring Lake Park High School. Don't you just wonder what some of the other entries were?

**How was the "Panthers" name selected for District 16 athletic teams?**

By a vote of the high school's student body

**What and where was Spring Lake Park Elementary?**

This school opened in the fall of 1956 in the north wing of the then new high school complex. It was "retired" in 1961-62 following the expansion of Blaine and Woodcrest Elementary Schools.

**How large an area is occupied by Spring Lake Park High School, Kenneth Hall Elementary, Learning Alternatives, Community Services, and the District Offices?**

About 40 acres

**On what former site does the Westwood Elementary and Westwood Middle School complex sit?**



*Forty years ago, the May 6, 1965 tornado destroyed much of Woodcrest Elementary and the junior-senior high complex pictured above. School resumed two days later.*

The sprawling Clover Leaf Creamery Farms, from whom the land was purchased

**Why do school publications carry names such as "Oasis" and "The Sandpiper?"**

Many of the district's school buildings were built upon shifting sand dunes which were home to Sandpiper birds and vegetation known as the Sandburr (namesake of a local service organization).

**In what rather unique facility were some of District 16's elementary students housed between 1957 and 1965?**

The Twin City Arsenal, due to space limitations of the district's facilities. Superintendent Knalson negotiated a first year rental rate of \$15,000. It was later negotiated down to \$15/year (plus sewer and water).

**Who was the principal at the Twin City Arsenal School?**

Ross Johnson, former School Board member

**How long was Blaine Elementary used?**

This school proudly served students and the community from 1950 (before there was a District 16) until 1978 when fire destroyed much of the building. The building still stands, at 8966 Pierce Street in Blaine, now the Calvin Christian school.

**What are the construction dates of the current buildings in School District 16?**

Woodcrest Elementary	1950
High School	1955
Board of Ed. Bldg.	1964
Kenneth Hall Elementary	1965
Westwood Elementary	1966
Park Terrace Elementary	1969
Westwood Junior High	1971
<i>(current middle school)</i>	

**On May 6, 1965, more than half of Woodcrest Elementary was destroyed by a tornado as was much of the junior high and senior high school complex. In Fridley, 425 homes were destroyed and another 1,099 were**

**damaged. In Spring Lake Park, 149 homes were destroyed and 147 more were damaged. How many days of school did our students miss?**

Due to Herculean efforts on the part of community members and school staff, only two days of school were missed.

**What company built the high school's first athletic track?**

Actually, legend has it that Superintendent Knalson and high school Phy. Ed. instructor Don Watson took it upon themselves to create the track using a World War II bulldozer. That would have been fun to witness.

**How many square feet of roof space are on District 16 facilities?**

Nearly one million. There are 827,951 square feet or an area the size of 4.6 city blocks.

**How many courses were offered when the grades 7-11 Spring Lake Park High School opened in 1955?**

Only 41. By 1975 the number had risen to 170.

**In 1957, the high school football team had a secret weapon. What was it?**

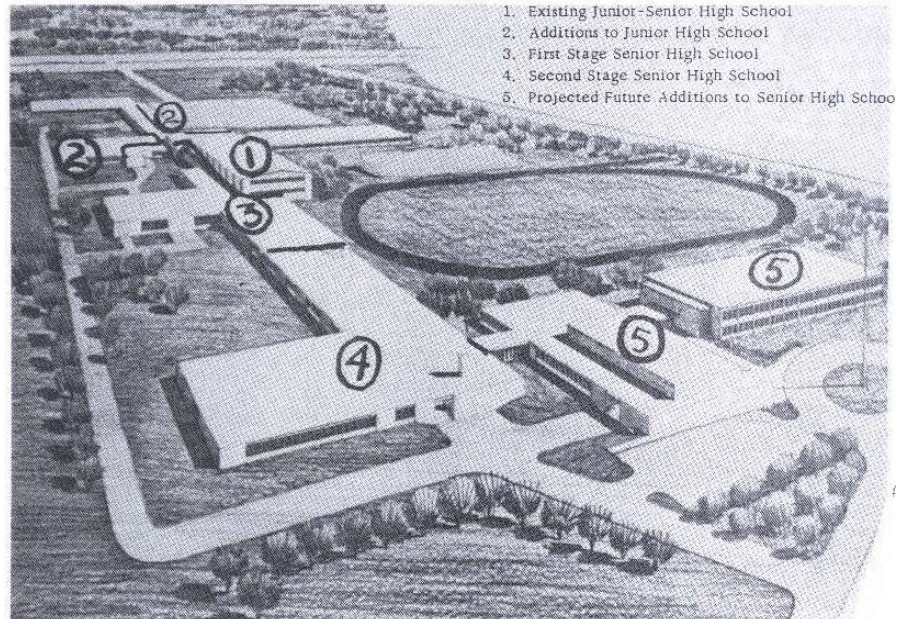
A layer of soil beneath the sod consisted of odiferous dirt and mink droppings from a mink farm in Columbia Heights. (*Well, it's just a fun fact . . .*)

**What was the District 16 enrollment in 1955-56, the first year of the new junior-senior high complex?**

1,096 students

**What is the enrollment for the current 2005-06 school year?**

About 4,400 students.



*The drawing above, reprinted from a 1961 yearbook, showed the “Plans and Dreams. Architect’s Drawings. Brick and Mortar. Pipe and Wire Working together will bring to realization the Spring Lake Park High School of the Not Too Distant Future.”*

**When was the most recent School District bond referendum?**

The last bond referendum was in 1995. Prior to that, it was 25 years earlier that the district asked for improvements for school sites, buildings, and equipment. This referendum, primarily for construction of the pool and Fine Arts Center, was passed on a 859 to 653 vote on Oct. 21, 1970

*A lot of time, passion, dedication, and effort results in a lot of school district history*

*This brief look at the creation and early history of School District 16 was compiled by Communications Coordinator Jim Elert after reviewing research that went into the recently completed book, “Spring Lake Park School District 16: Its Predecessors, Creation, and Growth Through 1976.”*

*The long-time efforts of three long-time school district residents, one now*

*deceased, have resulted in the completion of this book. This nearly 300-page history was compiled and written over a 15-year period.*

*It is a result of the passion and commitment of Mr. Robert Lindquist, long-time resident, friend of education, and one of the district's first School Board Chairs; Mr. Ross Johnson, former Director of Elementary Education and a former School Board member; and Mr. Ed Knalson, the District's second Superintendent of Schools and also a former School Board member. Mr. Knalson passed away in 1995.*

*The book is an amazing story of the birth of a school district and the cities and townships around it. It is a must read for anyone who loves history, this school district, and loves this special area of the Twin Cities.*

*The book is available for \$10 per copy, plus shipping and handling. To find out more, contact Kathy Serpinas in the District Offices at 763-785-5513 or kserpi@district16*

