

Schools

Before Leonia was incorporated, in 1894, the Vreeland family operated a boarding school on their property which students paid to attend.

The earliest school documents in the archive date from January 20th and May 1st, 1832 for the **Upper School** of the English Neighborhood.

A list of Scholars and the sums due from each of the last District ending January 20th 1832 in the upper school English Neighborhood		\$ ct		\$ ct	
Ellen Conover	x 2/2	1 25	Ann Conover	x 2/2	1 25
Margaret Peckham	x 1/2	2 50	Hannah Peck	x 1/2	2 25
Mary Lynde Case	x 2/2	1 25	Louisa Cooper	x 3/2	1 87
Mary Ann Leach	x 2/2	2 50	Isabel Conover	x 1/2	2 50
Elizabeth	1/2	2 50	Isabel Peck	x 1/2	2 50
Isabel	1/2	2 50	Isabel Peck	x 1/2	2 50
Sarah	1/2	2 50	Isaac Peckham	x 1/2	2 25
Leticia	1/2	2 50	James Leach	x 1/2	2 50
Francesina	1/2	1 67	John Leach	x 1/2	2 25
Ellen	1/2	1 25			\$ 44 16
Sarah	1/2	2 50	Due the Teacher		\$ 42 00
Mary	1/2	2 25	Balance or surplus		2 66
Charles	1/2	2 50	Appropriated to stove and pipe		
Sabrina	1/2	2 25			

Vreeland Papers, January 1832

It lists the names of students and the sums due for their tuition. An attendance register for 1856-1868 lists students attending Central School District #11 of the English Neighborhood. Some of the names appearing in these documents are descendants of Leonia families. The only existing photograph of the **Leonia Elementary School** dates from 1880. It was a two-room wooden building, a third room having been added in 1890. The school was located on the marshland on the west side of Grand Avenue near Christie Heights Street. By the turn of the century the school was already in poor physical condition, with unsanitary latrines, and enrollment had reached 107 students.



Leonia Elementary School, Grand Avenue, 1880

Newcomers such, as Ilona West, campaigned on behalf of a new, brick elementary school away from the noise on Grand Avenue. Her husband, Frederick West, designed the new school. West had been trained by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White and the new elementary school reflected the Beaux-Arts style that was indicative of the firm's other public buildings. It opened in 1905 on the corner of Broad and Crescent Avenues.



Leonia Elementary School, Broad Avenue, 1905

In 1918 \$10,000 was voted on for an addition to the school's east side. Sixty-nine years later the building would go up in flames, set by an arsonist's hand. (A modern

building replaced it in 1997.) By 1923 enrollment grew substantially and a new addition was constructed and connected by a corridor with the original building.



Leonia Elementary School, Broad Avenue and Crescent Avenue, 1923

The new building extended east on Crescent Avenue and north along Highland Street. The new school was occupied in 1924 and featured an auditorium. Under a WPA Arts Project Leonia artist Howard McCormick painted two historic murals on either side of the stage in 1936.

There were not enough students in Leonia to economically operate a high school. By inviting pupils from the surrounding communities on a tuition basis the Borough raised sufficient funds to purchase land and construct a building on Christie Heights Street. **Leonia High School** was completed in April of 1913. The building included 18 classrooms equipped with foot warmers, drinking fountains, separate gymnasiums for boys and girls, and a 500 seat auditorium.



Leonia High School, Christie Heights Street, 1913

By 1916 an addition facing Broad Avenue was built featuring an imposing portico supported by four Greek columns.



Leonia High School, Broad Avenue, 1916

In 1937, under the Federal Works Administration, a wing was added to the west side of the building. This addition provided a modern cafeteria along with more classrooms. In 1977 a new high school was built in Overpeck meadows and this school became a middle school.