

The History of Sanford School

The great pines of Sanford are a hallmark of our school. For many years they lined a narrow, dirt, farm road which meandered across open fields, through an apple orchard, to a large Victorian farmhouse and its sizeable accompanying barn. The farm, then known as Pine Glen Farm, was purchased by Sanford and Ellen Sawin in 1929, as a home for their 5 children and for several other boys and girls who needed a home and a family. Sanford Sawin, Jr., the eldest son, had died in 1916 and it is in his memory that his parents founded a school on September 24, 1930.

The Sawins chose a premise on which to found the school, originally known as Sunny Hills School. It will be a school where “No Talent Lies Latent”, a school where children will know the love of learning, a school in which each child will play an integral part.

Sunny Hills was not a typical school, but a combination of home, school and farm. Students and faculty were on a 24-hours-a-day and 52-weeks-a-year basis. New buildings and dormitories were added and existing facilities were remodeled. In 1937, the first class graduated from Sanford Preparatory School and in 1938 the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools accredited the school.

Throughout the war years of the 1940's, the school experienced steady growth. Many war-burdened families needed a school like Sanford and the number of foreign students increased. Building construction continued, and students and faculty did much of the work.

The 1950's brought a period of dissatisfaction with the “status quo”. The school community was changing from a rural to a suburban one and maintaining a boarding school at the elementary level was questioned. The school felt a need to strengthen the academic program, improve faculty salaries and continue to build new buildings and maintain existing ones. An era in Sanford history quietly ended with the death of its founder, Ellen Q. Sawin, in 1963.

The leadership of Sanford was assumed by daughter, Nancy Sawin, who knew the school must expand its base and broaden its scope. The 1960's brought many changes. The school's name changed to Sanford School in 1966 and seven buildings were built in as many years throughout this decade. A once small,

family oriented, country boarding school changed to a sizeable, resident and country day school.

In the mid 1970's, with the resignation of Nancy Sawin, the leadership of the school by a member of the founder's family ended. A period of unsteady growth and instability followed until the appointment of Gordon Schofield as Headmaster in 1980.

The 1980's were a period of great change and growth. The boarding school and riding programs were dropped and reorganization into a full-fledged day school was begun. In the mid-1980's, 55 acres of land which the school owned were sold and the monies were used to begin an endowment fund for Sanford. Unfortunately in June of 1989, a tornado struck the campus, causing millions of dollars of damage and ending a campaign for the endowment that had begun after the sale of the land. The school recovered and in so many ways turned a tragedy into another period of positive growth for the school.

The 1990's were a time of growth and stabilization. There was a reorganization of most administrative offices including the appointment of a new Head, Kristi Kerins. There was a strong emphasis on collaborative leadership in areas that range from governance to budget building to long range planning to the nurturing of professional growth and development to the successful kick-off of a multi-million dollar capital campaign.

In 1998, Douglas MacKelcan, Jr. was appointed the Head of School. The dawning of the new century brings with it a time of excitement and change to the Sanford campus. In 2001, Mr. MacKelcan announced the launch of a \$10 million capital campaign entitled "Shaping Our Future: The Campaign for Sanford." The campaign represented the largest improvement project in the school's 76-year history. The campaign goals included significantly improving the infrastructure of the school, renovating historic classroom buildings, and constructing a new Upper School classroom building and a new wing on the Lower School. On the horizon is the construction of a new Performing Arts Center.

Having celebrated its 75th anniversary during the 2005-06 school year, Sanford is poised and ready to continue its commitment to leadership and service in the independent school world.