

Lodi Schools Circa 1924 Weekly News October 25, 2002
Lodi History Highlights by Artie Maglionico, Borough Historian

The Fall of 1924 found the up and coming Borough of Lodi celebrating the opening of its first "motion picture house!" The date was September 20. The name was "The American Theater".

One thousand, one hundred happy movie-goers were on hand to take part in the opening night ceremony. If you were among them, then by all means contact me at your earliest possible convenience.

On October 30th of that year, County Superintendent of Schools, B.C. Wooster of Hackensack, paid a visit to Lodi. The purpose of his trip to our town was to inspect the condition of Lincoln School which had recently been remodeled. Afterwards Mr. Wooster joined with supervising Principal Henry V. Matthews in visiting the remainder of the borough's public schools. Mr. Wooster was impressed with what he saw and told the principal that Lodi was way ahead of other communities in its care of school children.

There were many children in Lodi then. In fact during the early to mid-1920s, the birthrate in Lodi was at an all time high. With this in mind, Mr. Wooster recommended that a new school be built as soon as possible. The opening of a new building would cut back on the number of part-time classes thus improving the quality of education.

Mr. Matthews strongly suggested that a 15-room school building be erected on the upper end of Union Street. "If the school were put there," said Mr. Matthews to a reporter from a local paper, "it would take care of the children of Union Street and all of those who live east of Prospect Street."

Mr. Matthews' plan was to use the Lincoln School for children from Liberty Street, the lower side of Prospect Street, as well as those children from South Main Street. Roosevelt School would then be used for children in the higher grades.

"Eventually," said Mr. Matthews, "I would like to have each school contain all the grades." Mr. Matthews also stated that a 10-room addition should be constructed at the Roosevelt School thus making that the principle school of the system. "It is also likely," added Mr. Matthews, "That if the new school is built, it will contain an auditorium." The town of Lodi was ahead of its time in all areas of government and was praised not only for its education system but also for giving its community members the best family medical clinic in Bergen County.

In his interview with the dated October 30, 1924, Mr. Matthews stated that Lodi was not yet ready for a high school of its own. He said that it was surprising that out of a total enrollment of 2,300 children only about 100 were taking higher courses of study. It would be another 10 years before the birth of Thomas Jefferson High School, better known as "Lodi High School". The building on Union Street was eventually built and was named Wilson School. But you knew that.

Thank you to Cynthia Forcarino for supplying me with these historical facts