

THE FOUNDING OF THE PORT ELIZABETH COLLEGIATE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, 1874

From Vision to Reality

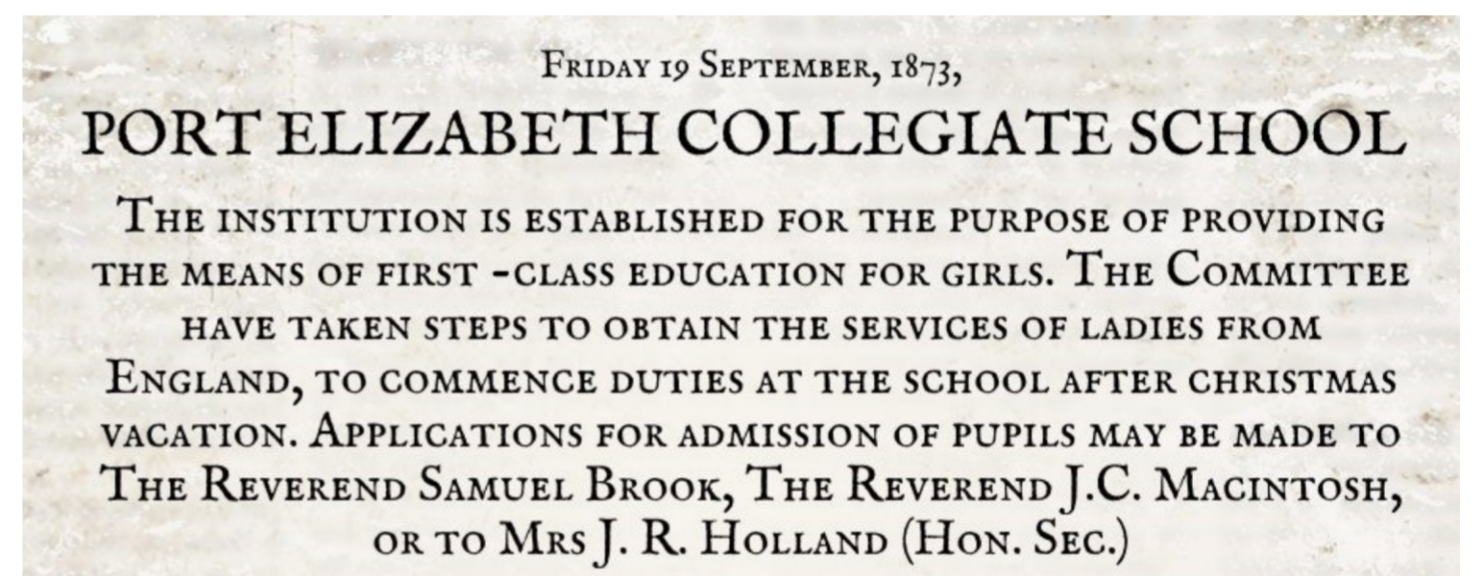
15 
Years of Excellence
1874 - 2024



The Vision

In June 1873, a pioneering assembly convened within the historic Grey Institute on the Donkin, driven by a shared determination: to forge pathways of education for the young women of Port Elizabeth. While the Grey Institute stood tall for boys, the call for equitable opportunities echoed loudly for girls.

Through concerted efforts, the Port Elizabeth Collegiate School emerged, its inception heralded in the pages of the Eastern Province Herald in September 1873. With anticipation mounting, the announcement of the esteemed Lady Principal, Miss Isitt, graced the headlines on 19th December. Miss Isitt was to embark on her journey to Port Elizabeth in January 1874.



The Vision Realised

With Miss Isitt as the first Lady Principal, the school opened with 38 pupils in February 1874 in a house at no 15 Western Road.

The school day was fairly leisurely – from nine to one. There were boarders but after two months, Miss Isitt wanted them out of her charge as “they were detrimental to the health of her body and the peace of her mind”!

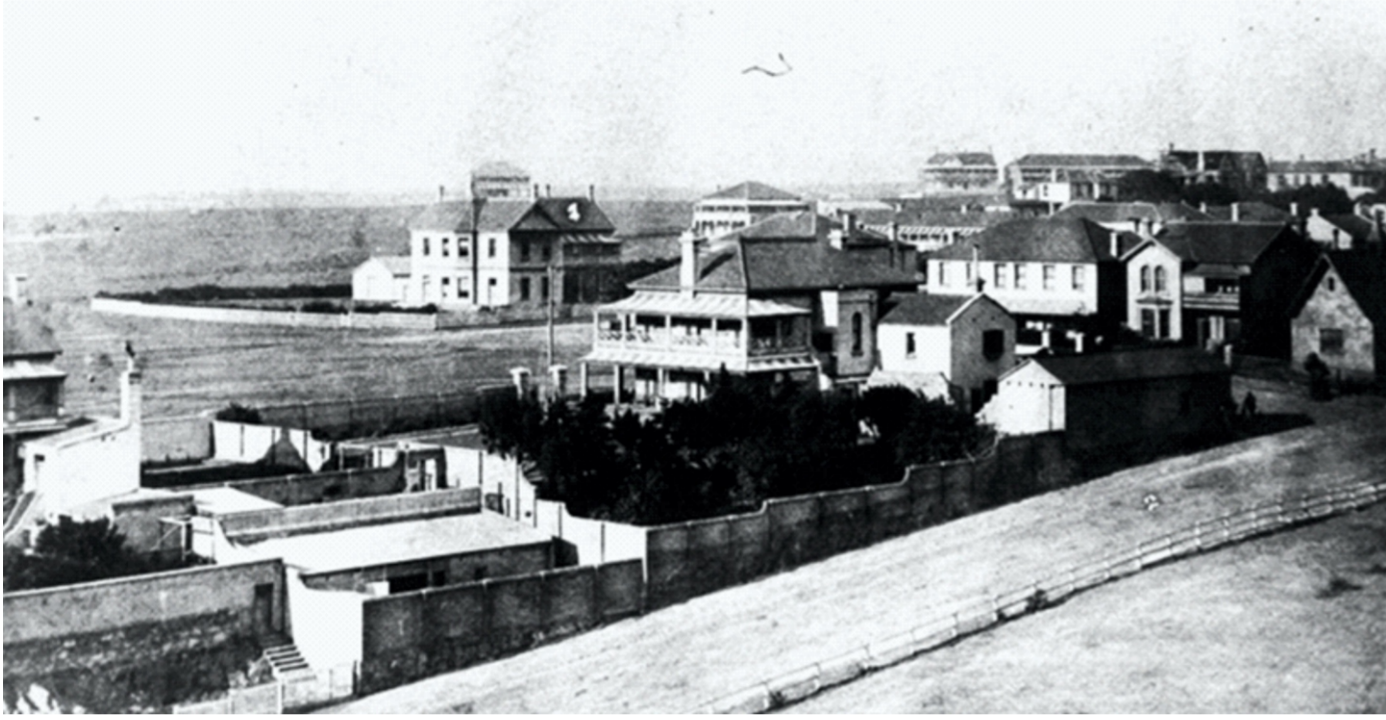


THE GROWTH YEARS

Establishing a presence

1875 to 1906

15 
Years of Excellence
1874 - 2024



The Early Years

By December 1874, the school numbers had increased from 38 to 64 pupils and funds were sought for the building of a school. It took a while, with the foundation stone for the Bird Street school being laid in 1877 and the official opening in July 1878. Many of the pupils lived in the then Main Street, now Govan Mbeki Avenue, and had to walk up the steep hill to school.

After 25 years and three Principals, the Committee placed the school under the Cape Education Department. This brought with it financial support and inspection! Miss Pride, the fourth lady Principal, arrived in mid-1900, and worked on obtaining a new school building. In 1905, with funds from the Government and the Town Council, the foundation stone of the new Bird Street School was laid with great ceremony. The new school – “the white and green palace” – was officially opened a year later by Sir Thomas Muir, Superintendent General of Education, and the original building became the boarding school.

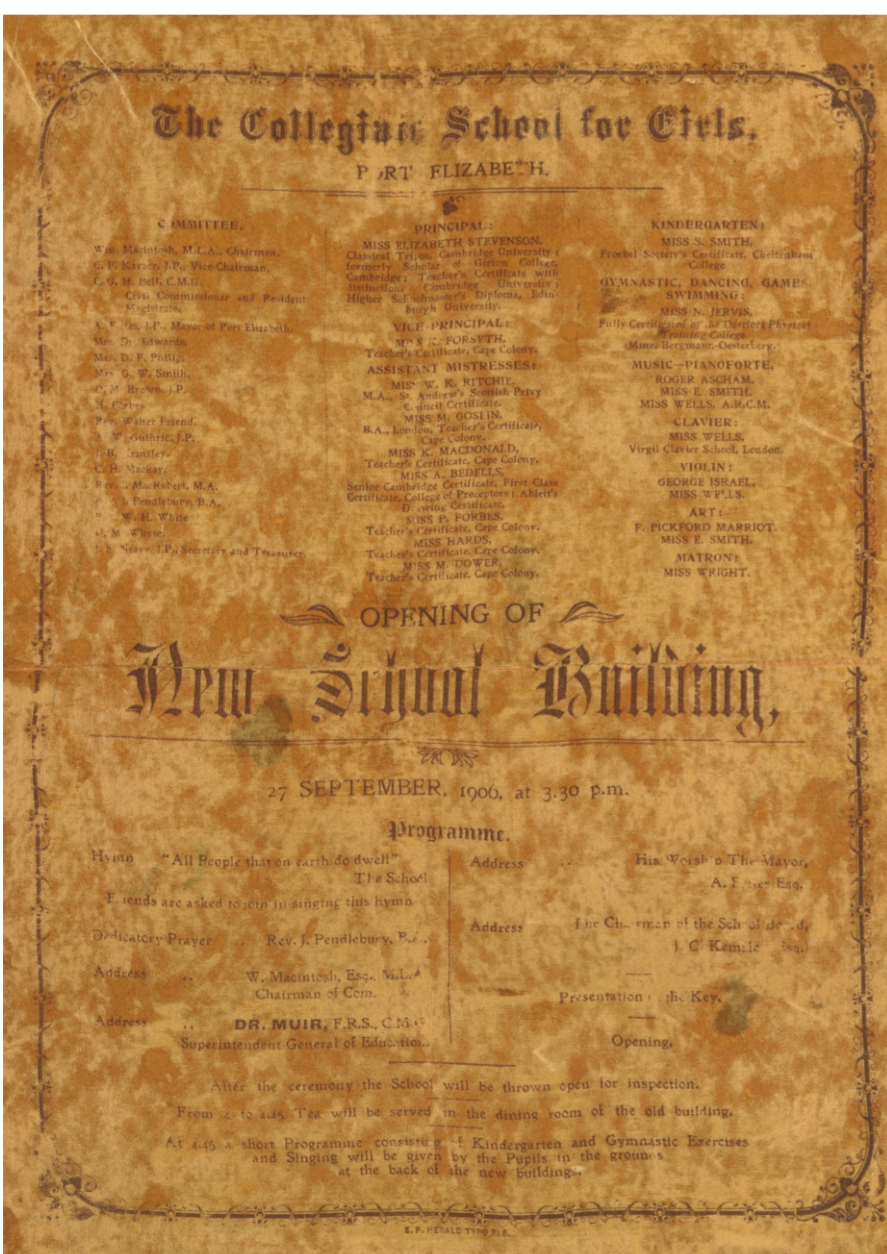


And now a word about the new building. It is erected on the Renaissance design, somewhat resembling the old Cape Dutch style, with gables and small paned windows. The battered buttresses, however, are an unusual feature in this style, are at once useful, and add much to the appearance, while the high plinth, faced with Grahamstown bricks, will form a fine, massive-looking base. The building has a 200 feet frontage to Bird Street, and will comprise twelve classrooms, very spacious and lofty, each about 24-0 x 20-0 x 16-0 high, and capable of holding a total of 300 scholars. In addition, there will be ten music rooms, with sound-proof walls, principal's and teachers' room, kindergarten department, very attractively arranged with large, square bay windows, and a folding partition, which will divide the babies' room from other infants. The roof of the building is to be covered with the beautiful English red Broseley tiles, probably the first to be used in Port Elizabeth, while the floors are sound proof and fire resisting. It is built with a view to the addition of a fine school hall, which will include a lunch room and kitchen.

from Girls' Collegiate School, Port Elizabeth, Magazine, December 1905

Extract from Miss Pride's speech at the laying of the foundation stone

Miss Pride, who was warmly received, said:- This 30th day of August, 1905, is a RED LETTER DAY in the history of the Girls' Collegiate School. It marks a stage in its upward path commemorates the attainment of a goal long striven for, and we do well to rejoice; but let us not forget to-day those who have gone before and made our road for us. Just 32 years ago there came to one woman in Port Elizabeth 'the arrest of thought.' 'Why,' said this mother, 'should we be compelled to send our daughters over-sea, or deprive them of the benefits of a good school training? Why not bring the school to the girls rather than continue to send the girls to the schools?'



THE GAMES CLUB

The early years

A gentle start



15 
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1903: Hockey Teams in outfits of the Collegiate Games Club

The beginning of sport at Collegiate

In the first Collegiate, a long shed served as a gymnasium and everyday 'Callisthenics' and 'Arm Exercises' were on the timetable. As the 19th century drew to a close, tennis, played in flowing white dresses, cricket and basketball were played.

Hockey came to Collegiate in 1900 and the first hockey match played was between the Day Scholars and the Boarders. Remarkably, the Boarders won! In 1903, hockey badges were introduced. The badges were silver and in the shape of a hockey stick with the letters C.P.H.C. (Collegiate Pioneer Hockey Club). The challenge was playing on a field that sloped!



circa 1910: Hockey on the playing fields

At the end of 1903, the first Annual School Sports Day was held on the playing field. Some 300 to 400 spectators attended and the event ended with the singing of the School Song.



circa 1903 Tennis Team. centre: Miss K Forsyth, Mr A Macdonald (coach)



THE FIRST ELEVEN 1912



CONTINUED GROWTH

Becoming two schools

1906 to 1928

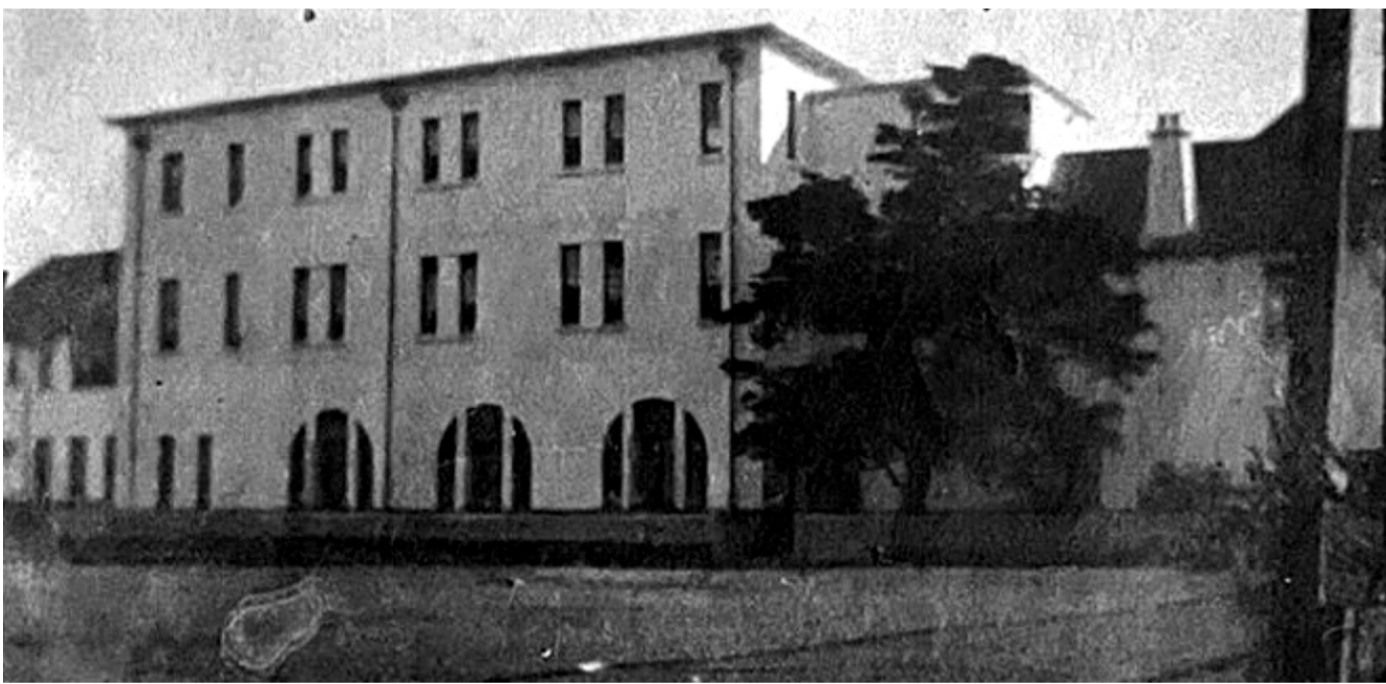
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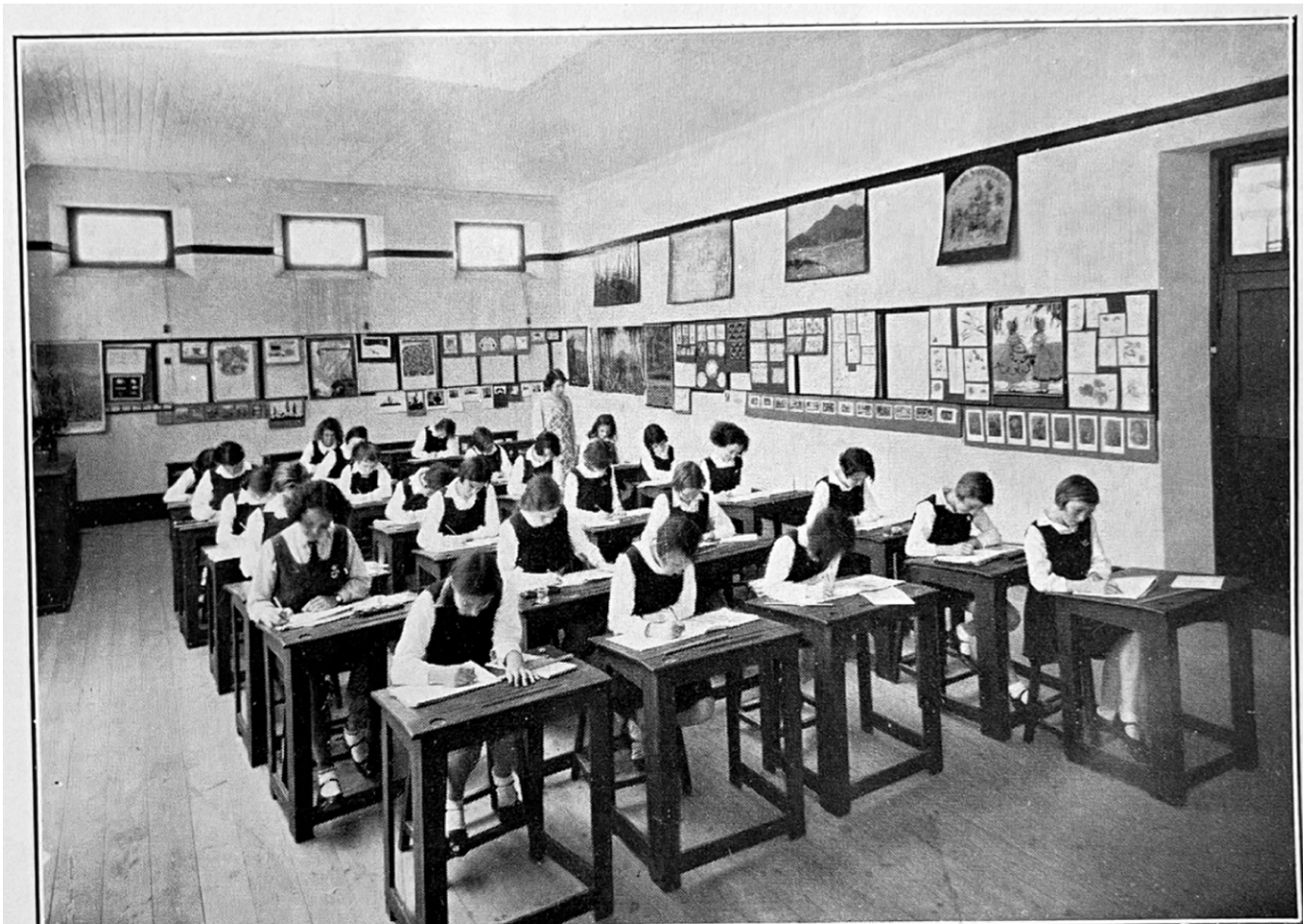
1910: Pupils from Std 1 up in the Stevenson Hall. Mr E B Pagden in the front row.



1928: The Junior Collegiate School on Castle Hill



Circa 1920: St George's House



ART ROOM—JUNIOR SCHOOL.

The need for more space

Much growth happened during the early years of the new Bird Street School. At this stage there were still little boys attending the kindergarten classes. By 1913, the enrolment had increased to 350 pupils and to make space, the Kindergarten had to migrate to Annerley House in Annerley Street.

With continued growth, in August 1928, the new Junior Collegiate School building was officially opened by Mr Lawson Brown, and the Junior School became a separate entity. In his speech Mr Lawson Brown said that **officially** the schools became separate, but not in **affection**.

The first Junior Collegiate Principal, Miss Stoops, expressed the hope that the parting of the ways between the schools would only be from the point of organisation, and that in everyway they should co-operate and work together.

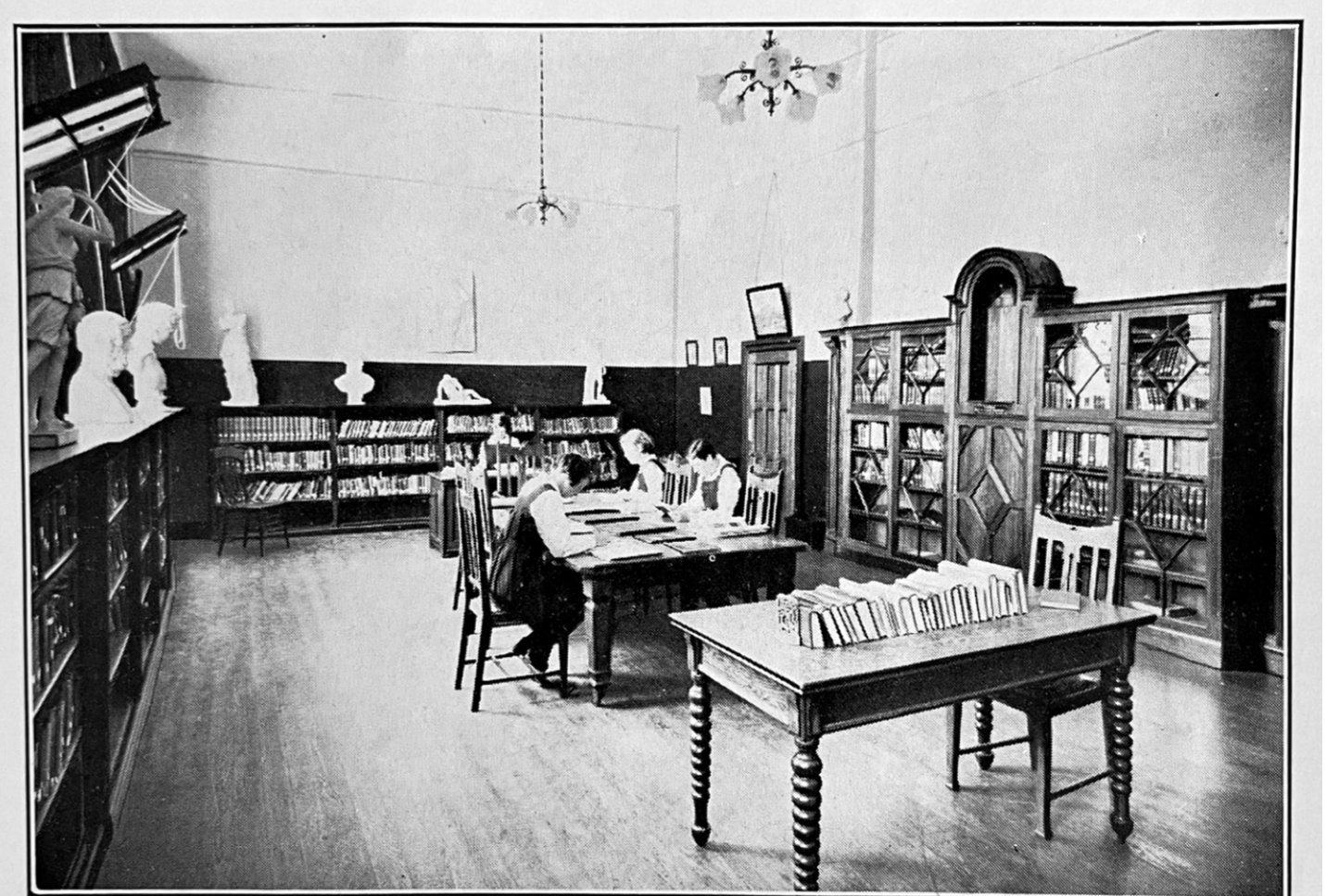
THE COLLEGIATE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

THE Collegiate School was founded in the year 1874, by a committee of progressive men and women in Port Elizabeth, who decided to secure for their daughters a school, "on the lines of the best high schools for girls in England." For the first twenty-five years of its existence, the school remained a private school under the management of its own Committee, but in 1900 it was placed under the control of the Education Department. In the years which followed, numbers steadily increased and it was found advisable to divide the school into two parts. The new Junior School was opened in 1928, under a separate Headmistress, to take all pupils up to Standard VI.

The School aims at providing a sound course of instruction on the lines laid down by the Education Department of the Cape Province, and, at the same time, it seeks to preserve the outlook and tradition which have given it in the past its individual character and tone.

Emphasis is laid on cultural subjects such as elocution, art, singing, and instrumental music.

Through the splendid work of the Old Girls' Guild, the Senior school has been enriched with beautiful pictures and casts. Each school has a good library. Efforts are made to encourage individuality and self-government among the pupils, and to hold up constantly the ideal of social service.



SENIOR SCHOOL LIBRARY.

TRADITIONS ESTABLISHED

Houses, Service and Events

Miss Anderson's Era

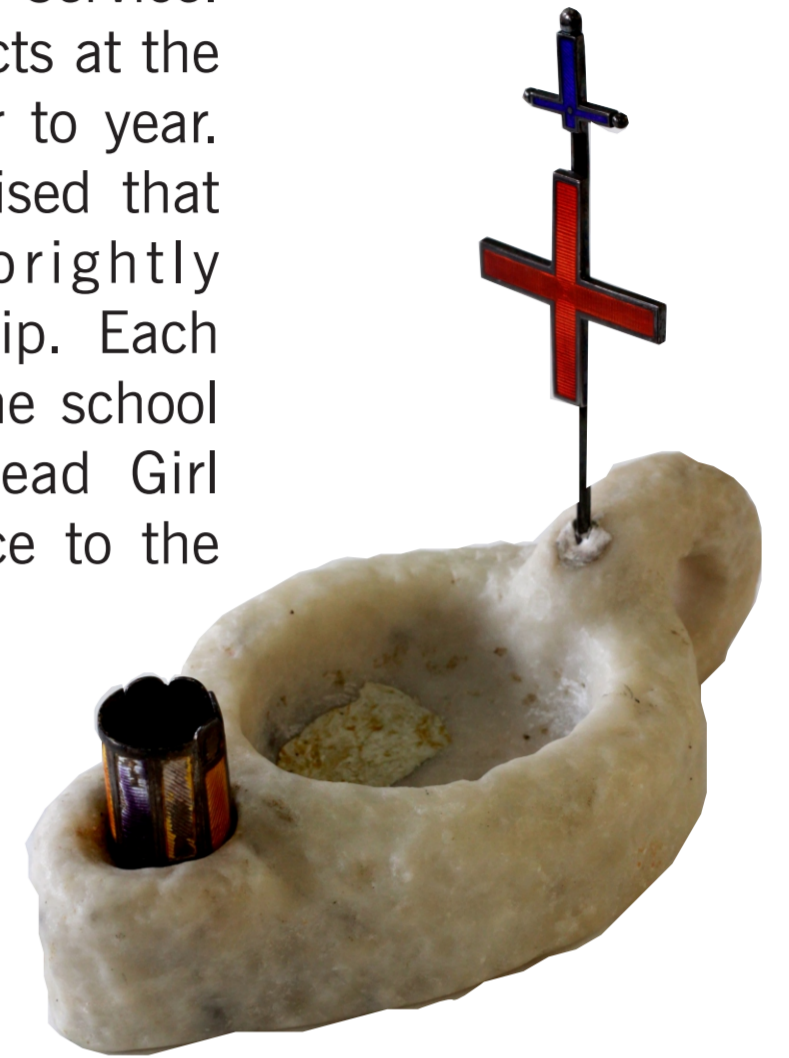
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Introduction of Prefects - 1911

Miss Anderson, the sixth Principal of Collegiate, introduced the prefect system. The first prefect body had nine girls to hold office for one year, chosen by the Principal, the staff and the older girls. Miss Anderson wrote: "The greatest honour a school can give is bestowed on the girl who is chosen by her comrades, and by those in authority, as one trusted by all to perform true and loyal service". The badge that was chosen was the emblem of an eagle, a symbol of authority and government.



In 1928, as a parting gift to the school, Miss Anderson presented to the school a small Lamp of Service. She handed it to the prefects at the time to pass on from year to year. Lighting the lamp symbolised that service we to burn brightly throughout their prefectship. Each year at the induction of the school prefects, the outgoing Head Girl hands the Lamp of Service to the incoming Head Girl.



The Houses

In 1919 the Boarding Establishment was divided into two wings and the boarders numbered over 110. It was decided to form each of the two wings into "Houses", the older wing being St Michael's House with the house colour of bright blue. The new wing would be St George's House with the colour of bright red. The Day Girls would have a house of their own, the Queens' House. The Queens' House Prefects were allocated a small room in the school and they adorned the room with purple hangings, purple being the colour of their house.

As the School grew in numbers, so the need arose for additional Houses: in 1920, Queens House split into Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra; in 1935, Queen Mary was added; and in 1975, Queen Elizabeth. In 1984, the Boarder Houses became one: St Michael and St George were then disbanded in 2005 as the day girl numbers increased, and brought back in 2010.

Annual Carols

On the last day of the last term in 1913, the first Collegiate Carol-Singing took place in the Stevenson Hall. The School and a choir formed by the Old Girls' Guild "gave a beautiful rendering of many of the old Christmas carols". The different classes sang the various carols alone; sometimes the whole school would sing the hymn or chorus. The service ended with everyone singing the "Adeste Fideles".

£12 was received from the 1s. entrance to the hall. This was donated to the *In Memoriam* fund to provide a Collegiate cot for a sick child. This was in memory of three little Collegiate girls who had passed away during 1913.

Constitution of the Houses.

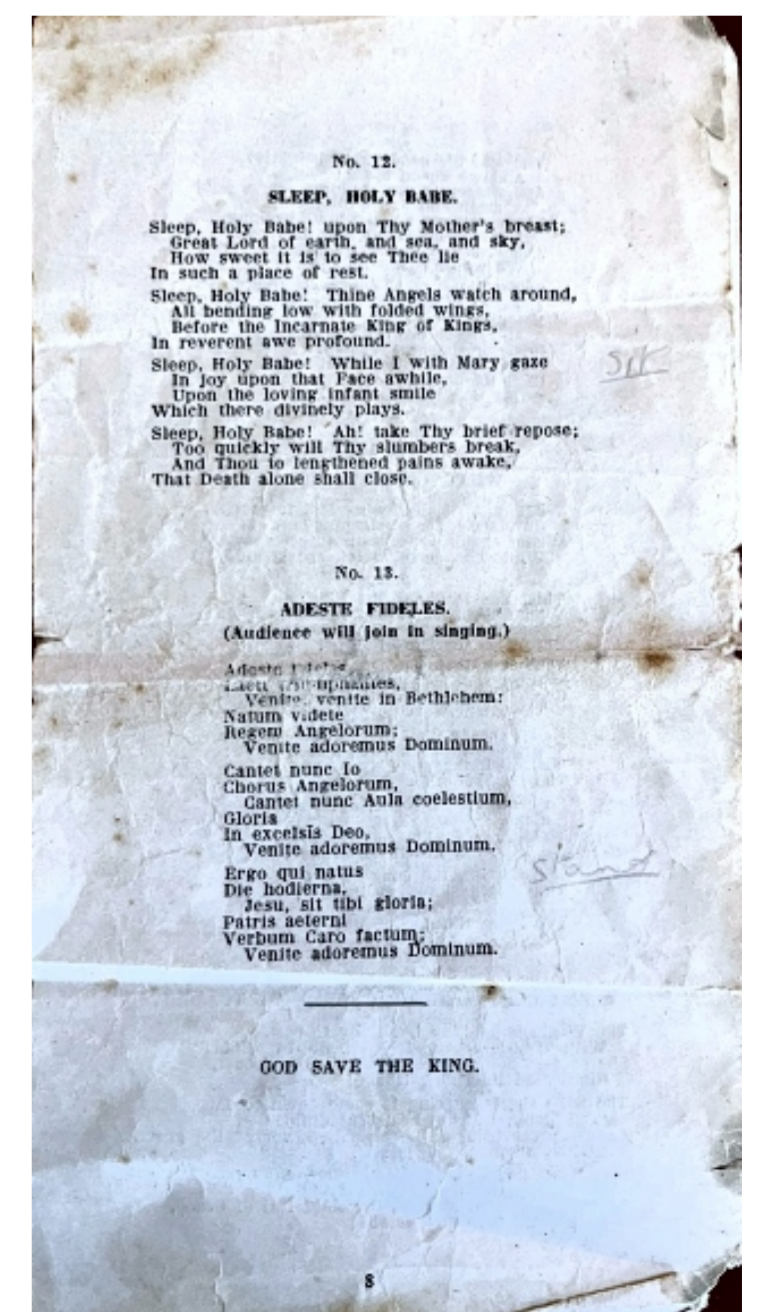
1. Three Houses are to be formed:—

- QUEENS' HOUSE.
- ST. MICHAEL'S HOUSE.
- St. GEORGE'S HOUSE.

Every girl in Classes V. to E shall belong to one of the three Houses.

2. The objects of the foundations of the Houses are:—

- (a) To promote esprit-de-corps and unity of effort and interest among all the girls—Seniors and Juniors—who belong to the House.
- (b) To establish friendly rivalry with the other Houses.



PARSONS HILL CAMPUS

Equipped for the future

1964 onwards

The Headmistress and School Committee
invite you
to attend the laying of the Foundation Stones
of the new Collegiate High School for Girls,
Kestell Street, Parsons Hill, Port Elizabeth
by
The Superintendent-General of Education
Mr. D. J. Liebenberg, M.A., B.Ed.,
and
Mrs. Lily Parkes (nee Edwardes)
on Saturday, 18th April, 1964, at 3.30 p.m.



A larger school and campus realised

By the 1950s, the number of girls exceeded the Bird Street facilities and the school was becoming dilapidated. A site in Parsons Hill was identified and in 1954 the building of the school was placed on the Education Department's estimates. It took several years before the first sod was turned on 30 January 1964, followed by the laying of the foundation stone on 18 April 1964. The school was built at a cost of R650 000, and could accommodate 600 pupils, including 110 boarders. The school would also have its own sports fields - two hockey fields, twelve tennis courts and two netball courts - for the first time since its founding in 1874.

About 450 girls moved from the old school in Bird Street to the new school in April 1966.

The official opening of the new school building took place on 20 August 1966, along with the commemoration of the 92nd Founders' Day.

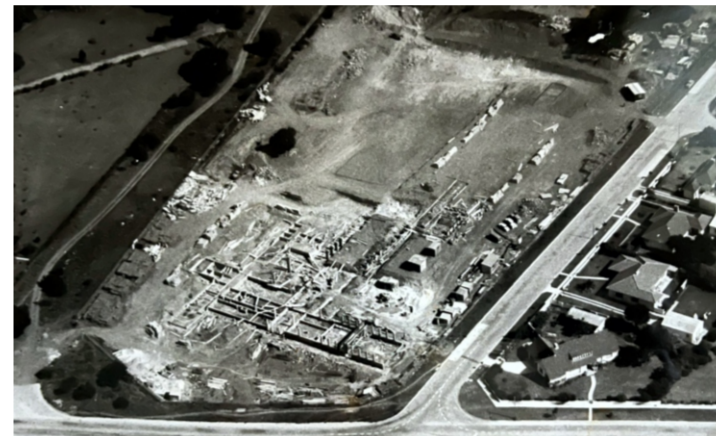
Dreams of early enthusiasts brought to fulfilment

From Miss M. E. Brock
Headmistress, Junior School 1924-39, Senior School 1940-1956

The need for expansion was increasingly apparent. Nearly 20 years ago the committees of the Junior School and the Senior School held the first of many combined meetings in the lovely panelled library in Bird Street. A site was procured, and now at long last we are to congratulate those who have brought to fulfilment the dreams of earlier enthusiasts.

We tend to cling to the security of what we know. Nevertheless change must come if we are not to stagnate. The young will welcome it, accepting the challenge to pursue an honourable tradition. Their task may be formidable. They must be assured of our encouragement..

Extract from Miss M E Brock's greetings to the Collegiate School on the occasion of the official opening. Published in COLLEGIATE, Official Opening of new school building, EP Herald, August 20, 1966



<p>1906</p> <p>THE SCHOOL BUILDING IN BIRD STREET</p> <p>Extracts from the programme used in 1906</p> <p>OPENING OF NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS</p> <p>27th September, 1906, at 3.30 p.m.</p> <p>PROGRAMME</p> <p>HYMN: "All People that on Earth do dwell" The Mayor (A. Fettes, Esq.)</p> <p>ADDRESS: The Chairman of the School Board (J. C. Kemsley, Esq.)</p> <p>DEDICATORY PRAYER: Rev. J. Penderbury, B.A.</p> <p>ADDRESS: W. Macintosh, Esq., M.A., C.M.G., Superintendent-General of Education.</p> <p>ADDRESS: His Worship the Mayor (A. Fettes, Esq.)</p> <p>ADDRESS: The Chairman of the School Board (J. C. Kemsley, Esq.)</p> <p>PRESENTATION OF THE KEY</p> <p>OPENING</p> <p>After the ceremony the School will be thrown open for inspection. From 4.00 to 4.45 Tea will be served in the dining-room of the old building.</p> <p>At 4.45 a short Programme consisting of Kindergarten and Gymnastic Exercises and Singing will be given by the Pupils in the Grounds, at the back of the new building.</p>	<p>1966</p> <p>PROGRAMME</p> <p>WELCOME: Mr. F. C. S. Bell, Chairman, School Committee</p> <p>HYMN: "All People that on Earth do dwell"</p> <p>SCRIPTURE READING: Rabbi B. Bender</p> <p>PRAYER: "Let us now praise Famous Men" Miss A. W. Sprenger, Vice-Principal</p> <p>CHOIR: 1. "Lift thine eyes to the Mountains" Mendelssohn 2. "Die Heer is my Herder" Henry Smart</p> <p>HEADMISTRESS: Miss R. G. Waterfield</p> <p>PROSE PASSAGES BY PUPILS OF THE SCHOOL: English: From "Gitanjali" R. Tagore Afrikaans: Uitrekkeel, Spruuke R. Tagore Latin: Dominus Pasce Me French: Des Philippines Capitule IV, Vers 8</p> <p>HYMN: "Now thank we all our God"</p> <p>PRAYER OF DEDICATION: Rev. B. Woods</p> <p>ADDRESS: THE HONOURABLE J. N. MALAN, Administrator of the Cape Province.</p> <p>PRESENTATION BY THE ARCHITECT: Messrs. Jones & McWilliams</p> <p>THE OPENING</p> <p>VOICE OF THANKS: The Head Girl</p> <p>THE SCHOOL SONG</p>	<p>All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice; His serve with fear, His praise forth tell, Come ye before Him, and rejoice. The Lord, ye know, is God indeed: Without our aid He did us make; We are His folk, He doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take. O enter then His gates with praise, Approach with joy His courts we see; Praise, laud, and bless His name always, For it is seemly so to do. For why? The Lord our God is good: His mercy is for ever sure; His truth as all times firmly stand, And shall from age to age endure. To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, The God Whom Heaven and earth adore, From men and from the Angel-host, Be praise and glory evermore. Now thank we all our God, With hearts, and hands, and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, In Whom His world rejoices; Who from our mother's arms Hath blessed us with His grace, With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today. O may this banquet God Through all our life be near us, With every joyful heart And blessed power to cheer us; And keep us in His grace, And guide us when perplex'd, And free us from all ill! In this world and the next, All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given, The Son, and Him Who reigns With Them in highest Heaven, The One Eternal God, Whom earth and Heaven adore, For thus it was, is now, And shall be evermore.</p>
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Extracts from Miss R G Waterfield's essay:

WE'RE REAPING HARVEST SOWN OVER YEARS.

Today the Collegiate High School is reaping a harvest that has been sown over the years.

Perhaps it is due to the outstanding women who were the headmistresses that this school rose to such heights in so many spheres. The classroom was ... the place where the classics, mythology, current affairs, social and economic conditions of other people, the arts, the noble deeds of the past and the present, were brought home with enthusiasm and sincerity, to such an extent that their personalities, then in formation, bore the imprint for all time...

The Old Collegiate Girls have been a pillar of strength throughout the years. They have allowed their time and talents to be exploited on behalf of the school...

Our parents over the years realised what was happening to their daughters, and as the need for larger buildings with greater facilities became an obvious necessity, these interested people made tremendous efforts to provide finances that would give the amenities, which were felt to be essential for their educations of their daughters. ...

We are reaping the harvest of the experience of specialists in design, in building, in school requirements. These friends of the school have willingly given of their talents and time...

We are reaping the harvest of clear thought and sound judgement that has been the mark of the different school committees over the years. Somewhere the vision that was given to the first governors has been handed down to each successive school committee, so that there has been an accumulation of investments that have made the extras in this new building possible. ...

As we attend the official opening of the buildings this afternoon, the school will remember that it has many friends and that this fine building has only been made possible through their efforts.

On behalf of the school, I take this opportunity of saying "thank you". *Nos omnes gratias agimus tibi, Domine, cordibus et mentibus et vocibus.*

Published in COLLEGIATE, Official Opening of new school building, EP Herald, August 20, 1966

