

Private Schools of Bridgeton

The appearance of private finishing and secondary schools was wide spread during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To address the need for academic and cultural education beyond the elementary level, several private schools were established in Bridgeton. The quality of course work was high and the overall social and cultural atmosphere attracted many male and female students from across the country as well as from other parts of the world. The building of public secondary schools marked te decline in private schools on this level. Photographs and from three of these schools and memorabilia from South Jersey Institute are included in this exhibit.

Seven Gables

Built in 1872 as private residence by Franklin F. Westcott, Seven Gables was established as a private school for girls by his widow Sara S. Westcott in 1886. Subsequently this Gothic Revival Bridgeton landmark became a private hospital and finally a multi unit private residence.

South Jersey Institute

In 1865 the South Jersey Baptist Association proposed the idea to build a private co-educational secondary school. The Mulford family donated several acres of land on the highest elevation in Southern New Jersey located east of Atlantic Street above the Cohansey River. The four story red brick building was begun in 1870 and the first classes were held in 1871. The course of study was comprehensive and included opportunity for a well rounded education with high moral, academic, social and cultural standards. The school continued to attract students for thirty years. The final graduation was held in the spring of 1900. (See foot note for student recollections)

Ivy Hall

Ivy Hall was established as a private boarding and day school for young women. The school was begun in 1861 by Margaretta C. Sheppard, daughter-in-law of David Sheppard who built Ivy Hall in 1791. The course of study included major areas of academic study with special attention to ancient and modern languages and music. The school prospered with a outstanding reputation for excellence in student achievement. Ivy Hall Seminary continued until 1919 to attract students from across the United States and other countries. That year a sanitarium was established under the direction of Dr. Reba Lloyd.

For additional history of local private schools see We Women magazine vol. 14, October, 1952 and The City of Bridgeton in 1889 by Isaac Nichols. Both available at the public county and city libraries.

Note: Much local history is included in these little magazines published by Cowan Printing from 1938 - 1958. They are often overlooked as no complete index is available for the over two hundred numbers that were published