



## History: The Manlius School

The Manlius School was founded [as St. John's School] in 1869 by the Rt. Rev. Frederic Dan Huntington, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Central New York. On August 24th of that year the Bishop and nine other prominent citizens of Central New York met and incorporated St. John's School.

A building of the former Manlius Academy, founded in 1835 in the Manlius Village, was chosen as the school's home (this building still stands in the village on the corner of Seneca and Academy Streets and is presently used for classrooms and meetings by the Catholic Church). The Academy building was taken over at an annual rental of one dollar a year and a large residence nearby was bought for additional dormitory space. Although considered a diocesan institution, there was no church ownership then or at any time since, but the self-perpetuating Board of Trustees was entirely composed of Episcopalians.

The first class entered on October 1, 1869, with Bishop Huntington as President of the Board and Locke Richardson, A.M., a noted Shakespearian scholar, in active charge as Headmaster. Headmasters were changed frequently during the first few years, but Bishop Huntington retained his presidency until his death in 1904. In January 1871, the new building on the site of the present Comstock Hall was occupied. Constructed of brick, this was in its day a modern and suitable building for a civilian boarding school for sixty pupils.

By 1880, attendance had dwindled and there came insolvency. In 1881, there was a new corporation, as "St. John's Military School." Soon after, a three-story wing was added to the main building, the first story being devoted to lavatories. The second story was an assembly room for formations - since all formations were indoors until 1902 - and a well-appointed and attractive chapel occupied the third floor. A splendid gymnasium that served also as a drill hall was built on the site later occupied by the school kitchen and the King Club.

The new head was the Rev. John W. Craig, a clergyman with high-church tendencies. Either because Mr. Craig wrapped himself too narrowly in the church or because he was not a leader and disciplinarian, or for both reasons, the Trustees again found themselves in 1887 with rapidly dwindling attendance and meager funds.

Discouraged by two failures, they looked for an individual who would take over complete responsibility and the financial risk. They called William Verbeck, at the time co-principal of a military academy in Aurora, NY, on Cayuga Lake. Legality of the step was assured by granting him a lease not only of the tangible property but also of all the academic and other rights. He assumed all financial risks, including an existing indebtedness, and was entitled to any profit he could make in lieu of a salary.

Starting off with fewer than eighteen returning students, of whom he eventually had to expel ten for various reasons, he filled the school to its capacity of sixty before the end of the first year and within five years he had doubled that attendance. Remodels, a new water supply, and the installation of an electric light plant and other improvements made the place livable, but it was Verbeck's enthusiasm, energy, and ability to inspire and manage boys that enabled him to build up the school and bring it to national prominence.

After a series of setbacks, including depressions and fires, from each of which it emerged better than before, General Verbeck put the school in a strong position, marred as yet only slightly by the country's financial collapse of 1929. General Verbeck died in 1930 after a distinguished career taking the school from bankruptcy to one of the top military educational institutions in the United States. His son, Guido Verbeck, who had been associated with the school for many years, then became the head of school. He raised the school's academic standards and kept the school alive during the depression years. Guido died in July 1940.

The innovations for which The Manlius School was well known continued after the death of General William Verbeck. In 1937 The Manlius School organized the first ski patrol in an educational institution. This later

became a model for the United States Army, with many Manlius instructors and alumni serving as the nucleus for the army program in World War II.

Following General Guido Verbeck's death, General Asa Singleton was chosen to lead the school. He was forced to retire within two years due to ill health. Colonel D. P. McCarthy '08 then led the school until his death in 1946. Major General Ray Barker then became head of school and served until 1960. Brigadier General James K. Wilson, Jr. replaced him as superintendent and served Manlius from 1960 to 1969. Colonel Hughe Irish, USMC, served as head for one year, until the merger with Pebble Hill School when Richard Barter became the Headmaster of the merged schools.

The Manlius Old Boys, as the school's alumni were known, served in a number of wars including World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Memorials to those who did not return home exist on the Manlius Pebble Hill School campus. Those who did not choose to enter the armed services after graduating from Manlius, went on to colleges and universities all over the country and have gone on to lead successful careers in civilian life.

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Harry C. Durston, January 1966