

Fact Sheet: John D. Hardy Elementary School

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September 2013

- Built in 1923 to accommodate the increasing population of the Fells district.
- The Fells was one of the last sections of Wellesley to undergo development. Up through the early 1900s, there were only a small number of residences, all scattered throughout the area (but primarily situated on Weston Road and Worcester Street).
- The first schoolhouse in the Fells was the Fells School (now the Fells Branch Library) which was built in 1858.
- The population of the Fells began to climb beginning in the 1910s and the push for new school accommodations began as early as 1921. Initially, talk centered around constructing an addition to the old Fells School, but a committee by appointed to study the issue recommended in early 1922 to build a new schoolhouse.
- At the Annual Town Meeting in March 1922, it was voted to appropriate \$56,000 for the construction of a new Fells School. (An additional \$25,000 was supplied at a Special Town Meeting in November 1922)
- A building committee was the appointed and consisted of John D. Hardy (chair), John T. Gorman, Benjamin Proctor Jr., Lockwood J. Towne, and William Howard White.
- It should be noted that one of the members of the building committee, Benjamin Proctor Jr., was an architect who designed many of Wellesley's finest buildings constructed during the 1920s and 1930s, including Perrin, Kingsbury, and Warren Elementary Schools, the Community Playhouse, the Sprague Memorial Clock Tower, the Institute Building (now the Stuart Apartments), and the Wellesley Trust Company (now Bank of America) and Belvedere Apartments (now Boston Private Bank) on the corners of Abbott Road and Washington Street.
- The new Fells School opened in November 1923. Construction was done by the John W. Duff Company and cost a total of \$65,000.
- The architect of the new Fells School was Charles M. Baker, a graduate of M.I.T. with offices out of Framingham and Boston. Baker (1873-1942) designed primarily Colonial Revival buildings, many of which were built in Framingham and Southborough. One of his buildings is listed on the National Register of Historic Places: North Easton Grammar School (1916) – North Easton, MA. In addition, the Jonathan Maynard School (1916) in Framingham is listed as part of a local historic district. Baker was also an associate architect for Benjamin Proctor Jr. in the design of Kingsbury School (1924) in Wellesley.
- In the new Fells School, there were three classrooms that each held two grades (accommodating 40 students in each class) and one room for a kindergarten (also accommodating 40 students). Before this time, many students of kindergarten age did not go to school because of a lack of school accommodations.

- Before the first school year was over, there was already a need for additional classrooms. It was so bad that the kindergarten actually moved back into the old Fells School until an addition could be completed. (From 1920 to 1930, Wellesley's population soared from 6000 to 11,000 – in large part, because of the advent of the automobile. The town's proximity to Boston made it a highly desirable suburb.)
- In June 1924, the townspeople voted to rename the Fells School after John Dudley Hardy, a prominent citizen who had chaired the building committee for the new schoolhouse and had died the previous month at the age of 63. A graduate of Newburyport High school and Williams College ('82), Hardy began his career first as an investment broker before becoming an executive at Rice & Hutchins, Inc., a shoe manufacturing company in Boston. Following his retirement from the firm 15 years prior to his death, Hardy was engaged in real estate within Wellesley and the surrounding towns. He lived at 10 Livermore Road with his wife and three daughters. He was a member of the Mergus Club and Wellesley Club.
- A special committee was appointed in December 1924 to investigate the need for an addition to the Hardy School. It consisted of John T. Gorman (chair), Benjamin Proctor Jr., William White, Robert L. Studley, and L.J. Towne. At the Annual Town Meeting in January 1925, \$42,043 was appropriated for a three-classroom addition to Hardy School. B.W. Neal, Inc. of Brookline completed the work by September 1925.



North Easton Grammar School



Jonathan Maynard School



Kingsbury School