

The History of Mary Persons High School

In 1912, the Banks Stephens Institute was built as the first public high school in Monroe County. Eight years later, the high school department became overcrowded and space was needed to house the upper grades. The center home of the Institute was purchased and this portion of the building served as the high school department of the Banks Stephens Institute. It was used until 1929.

The growth in population soon required the use of a stand alone high school. In an attempt to provide facilities for a centrally located high school, a building was erected in 1929 to serve the high school age students of Monroe County . The Monroe County Board of Education elected to call this school Mary Persons High School in honor of the mother of two Monroe County citizens who had contributed land, money , and time to the educational progress of the county.

Concurrent to the history of Mary Persons High School was that of the Hubbard School which served the black citizens of Forsyth. Named in honor of two brothers, William and Samuel, the Hubbard School graduated its first class in 1905 and became recognized as the first vocational agricultural school in Georgia in 1918. In 1931, Hubbard was made into a junior college called The State Teachers and Agricultural College. Later in 1939, this school was merged to form the Fort Valley State College and a high school continued to serve the black students inside this newly developed organization. By 1956, Hubbard High served all black students of Monroe County.

By 1970, Hubbard High School and Mary Persons High School merged to serve grades 7-12. Mary Persons High was formerly located where the current Board of Education building is located.

During this time of integration, Mr. David Holland served as principal. His tenure lasted until 1973 when Mr. Frank Bates served as principal until 1980.

In 1983, the current MPHS building was erected during the tenure of Mr. Mike Hickman, Sr. It is quite possible that Mary Persons enjoyed some of its greatest accomplishments under the direction of Mr. Hickman. Twice in the 1980's, MPHS was named a school of excellence. The MPHS debate team won state championships in 1986, 1990, and 1991. The Literary team was state champions in 1984 while The Dan Pitts led football team won the AA state championship in 1980.

Mr. Hickman served as the principal from 1980-1999 when he was succeeded by Dr. Eric Porter. In 2000, Dr. Porter saw the expansion of 15 classrooms to this campus known as the 500 wing. In 2001 a technology lab was built. Dr. Porter's tenure ended in 2004 and he was succeeded by Mr. Joe Parlier. Under the direction of Mr. Parlier the planning stages for the new Mary Persons Freshman Campus were finalized in 2006-2007. The MPFC opened under the direction of the principal, Mr. Jim Finch, who replaced Mr. Parlier in 2007. Current principal, Mrs. Tammy Marion, replaced Dr. Finch in 2022.

Mary Persons High School serves students in grades 9-12 on two campuses. Mary Persons has enjoyed much success since opening its doors in 1929. MPHS strives to serve its community through service while also serving as a model of education to surrounding districts. Graduating students on time with the skills needed to be successful will continue to be its mantra well into the changes of the 21st century.