

Woodstock School – A Brief History

In 1854, a company of British officers and two American missionaries was formed in Dehra Dun opened the “Protestant Girls’ School” in Cainville House, Mussoorie. Two years later, the school moved to its current location, and in 1862, the institution became known as Woodstock School.

In 1872, following a short period of closure, members of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., purchased the school and reopened it primarily, though not exclusively, as a school for children with missionary parents. Near the end of the century, Woodstock functioned mainly as a finishing school for girls, though boys up to the age of twelve attended. It was during this period that Woodstock acquired additional classrooms, teachers’ quarters, dining and assembly halls, an infirmary, art studio and a music annex.

1901 saw the elevation of Woodstock into a college. Through affiliation with Allahabad University, young women could obtain a two year First Arts (FA) degree, and in 1910, a BA degree was also offered. In addition to these degrees, a Teacher’s Training program recognized by the U.P. education department was established in 1907. Though these programs declined during World War I and eventually dissolved, the architectural and residential growth achieved during this time carried a lasting impact into the next century. With the 1922 arrival of joint principals Rev. Allen E. Parker and his wife, Irene, Woodstock saw major changes. The school was remade into an interdenominational, coeducational, multiracial and multinational boarding and day school offering a program of study starting with Lower Kindergarten and concluding with either Senior Cambridge credentials or the equivalent of an American high school diploma. Academic and co-curricular programs were significantly bolstered, and Woodstock’s emphasis on outdoor education and exploration was established and secured. Construction during this period included High School departments and laboratories, manual training and home economics facilities, a library, a full auditorium, an athletic playground, and the Boys’ Hostel to accommodate a rapid influx of male student enrollment. In the 1930s, a focus on school athletics also prompted the construction of a sports field.

Because of the war, the early thirties brought a rapid increase of students to the school, primarily students of British parents and also students from China. The late forties proved to be a time of high staff turnover and low finances, but Woodstock’s educational and co-curricular programming continued to advance. In 1959, Woodstock was the third High School outside North America and the first school in Asia to receive US accreditation through the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. During the 1960s, Indian Music classes were introduced, as were cross-cultural courses in social studies, literature, art, and religion. Indian universities became more accepting of the Woodstock Diploma. The Woodstock “Package Program” came into being with eight students from the U.S. originally taking part.

From the late 1960s through the 1970s, Woodstock experienced a period of rapid change. Along with Kodaikanal International School in Tamil Nadu, Woodstock began to rethink its composition, purpose, and philosophy as an institution. The school consciously shifted its conception from that of a missionary school to a school consisting of an international student body, staff, and curriculum, with a strong Indian cultural component. The

Cambridge course, which had been dropped earlier from the curriculum, was replaced by the General Certificate of Education (London). During the late seventies there was also a marked influx of students for whom English was not a first language, and an English as a Second Language (ESL) program was established in 1978 for Grades 1 through 11.

In 1984, Woodstock's Middle School for Grades 5 through 8 (later modified to Grades 6 through 8) was formally organized. In 1990, the Association of Indian Universities recognized the Woodstock Diploma as being equivalent to the Indian school leaving examination, thus allowing graduates to enter Indian universities with greater ease. The most far-reaching and progressive innovation was the program for computer education, funded in 1986 by American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA), which also advanced construction of the Media Center with another grant. This building now houses a computer classroom, a language laboratory, an art room, a journalism room and a small theater. In recent years, Woodstock has placed a priority on its academic programming with renovations to classrooms and laboratories, the introduction of contemporary classes such as Environmental Sciences, an increase in the number of US Colleges Advanced Placement examinations offered to and taken by seniors, and the 2003 requirement of all seniors to sit for the Cambridge University IGCSE examinations at Grade 10.

In December of 2002, the school was ranked as the #2 residential school in the country by *Outlook Magazine*. During 2004, Woodstock completed its application for continuing accreditation with MSA under the 'Accreditation For Growth' protocol, for the K-12 program. This coincided with the school's 150th anniversary, celebrated by the return of hundreds of alumni from around the world for an October festival. The most important recent addition to the school's program also came in October 2004 with the opening of the Hanifl Center for Outdoor Education and Environmental Study.