

NEWSLETTER:

Tewksbury Historical Society

P.O. Box 522

Tewksbury, MA 01876

TEWKSBURY GAZETTE

MARCH 2024

T E W K S B U R Y ' S F I R S T N E W S P A P E R

In Commemoration of Women's History Month

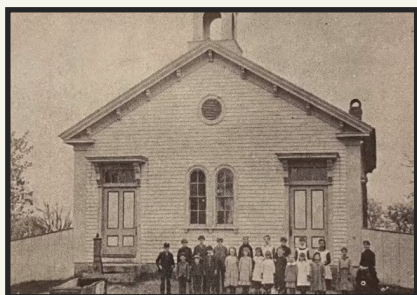
Ella E. Flemings

1863 - 1938

Ella E. Flemings was born in Tewksbury in 1863, on North Street to James and Caroline (Holt) Flemings. Ella's mother had been a teacher in Andover.

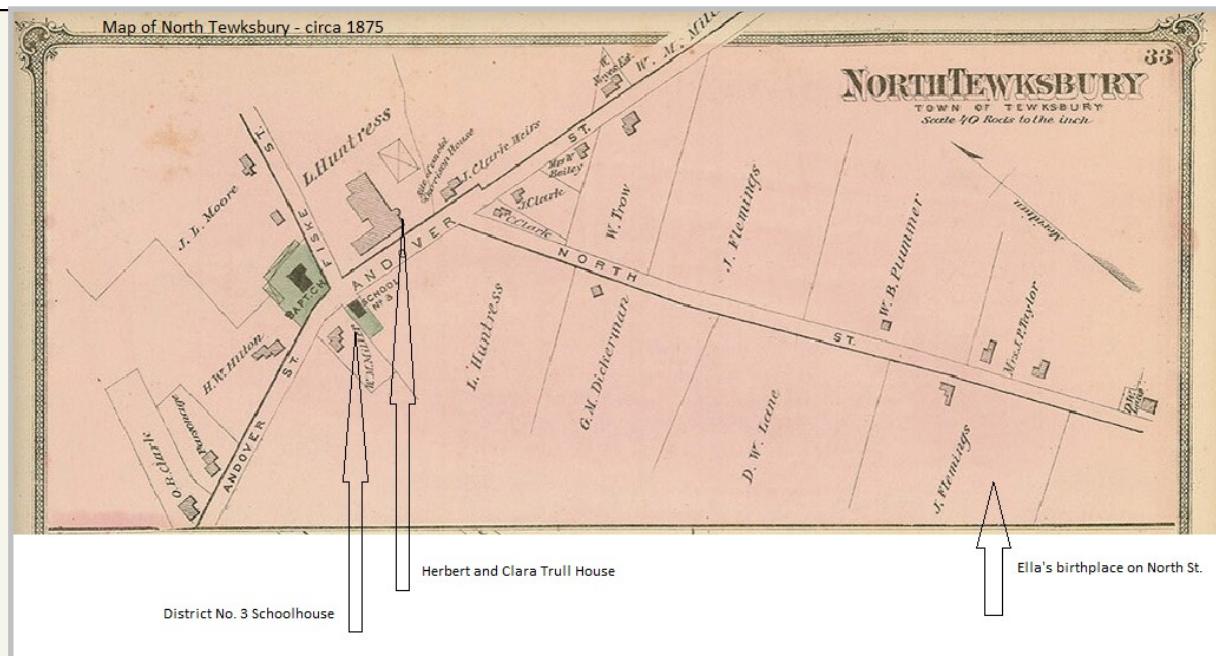
Ella attended the Tewksbury District No. 3 School, which would later carry her name. The one-room school house had no running water, no electricity, a wood burning stove for heat and two outhouses. All grades were taught in one classroom. Boys and girls had separate sides of the room, separate entrances, playgrounds and outhouses. Water was drawn from a well outside, in front of the building. Ella was a very good student and in 1878, she was listed on the Roll of Honor for being neither absent nor tardy for 19 terms.

After graduating High School in Lowell, she attended a summer course to prepare to be a teacher. In 1883, her name appears in Town Reports as a teacher at District No. 2 School, which was in Town Center, on the corner of Main and North Streets. According to town records, her, 'faithfulness and constant effort to do the best work are recognized by all who have come in contact with the school.'



In 1885, Ella began to work at the North District No. 3 School, along with Delia Bridge and Nellie Boutwell. Miss Bridge took a break and then resigned due to the overly heavy work involved with teaching at the school. Ella was given charge of the school for the remainder of that first term. Miss Boutwell resigned the next year, 1886. Now, Ella was in full charge of the school.





After living with her parents on North Street, Ella later moved to Andover Street, on the corner of Fiske Street, right across from the District No. 3 School with her sister, Mrs. Clara (Flemings) Trull and Clara's husband, Herbert Trull.

In 1907, Ella left the District No. 3 School to take a teaching position at the Foster School, in Town Center. She and her students worked hard to improve the grounds of the Foster School, purchased new see-saws and even started a school lunch club. In 1911, the Tewksbury School Committee voted to appoint Ella as the principal of the Foster School.

Ella was remembered as a skinny woman who walked with a limp and often wore a black skirt and white blouse. Her classroom was the first room on the left and she would make use of a 'clapper' so that students would walk in an orderly fashion.

It was in 1911 that the new addition North District No. 3 School was opened. The extra two rooms were used for a cooperative effort with a college, the Lowell Normal School, now UMass Lowell. The two rooms provided student teachers a place in a rural school setting, where there were multiple grades being taught in one room, to practice teaching methods with actual students. It is noted that the school's use for this purpose was among the first of its kind in Massachusetts. Plumbing, electricity and restrooms were included in that renovation.

In 1919, Ella's brother, Charles' wife Mary passed away. They had two young sons, Merton and Amos. Ella decided to resign from teaching and move to Lowell with her brother to assist with the raising of his two boys. The Tewksbury School Committee offered Ella a raise as an incentive for her to stay, but she still resigned from her duties in November 1919 to help her brother.

In 1920, the Tewksbury School Committee sought Ella's permission to name the District No. 2 Town Center School after her. Ella did not agree to this and so they named it the Spaulding School, after the Town's first pastor.

Ella's brother, Charles passed away in 1927 and Ella moved in with her nephew Merton in Syracuse, New York. Later, Merton and his family moved to Worcester, Massachusetts. Merton had a daughter, Eleanor and son, Merton Jr. who both credited their great aunt 'Nellie' for their love of education.

In 1928, the rear addition was built to add another classroom to the North School. The 1928 addition interior walls and ceilings were covered in decorative tin, which was a popular affordable alternative to plaster, as it lasted longer and was easier to clean. The layout of the building remains to this day. The building has served the town and community in several ways over the years, such as; a private pre-school, town special needs educational facility, storage for the school department and sixth grade classrooms when other schools in town were overcrowded.

In 1935, the Town of Tewksbury still wanted to remember and honor Ella's years of service. It was 15 years after they wanted to name the Town Center School after her. At a town meeting in 1935, it was voted to name the North School as the Ella E. Flemings School.



Miss Flemings passed away in 1938, due to heart disease and is buried, along with her family, on East Street at the Tewksbury Cemetery. Her obituary, from an unknown newspaper, describes her as a:

"gentle, upright and noble woman, dearly loved by both young and old. Boys and men alike felt it was an honor to raise their hat when meeting this lovable person. She held a respected place in the hearts of all who were privileged to sit in her classroom."

In 1997, the Tewksbury Historical Society dedicated the historical landmark and installed a plaque in memory of Ella E. Flemings, inscribed:

"An outstanding educator who gave so much to so many."

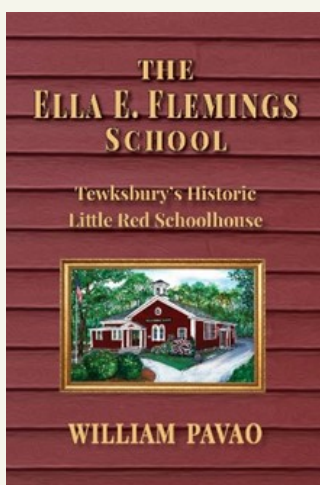
Submitted by,
Nancy Reed
Vice Pres., Tewksbury Historical Society

Many sincere thanks and acknowledgement for his work go out to author,
William Pavao,
who's book entitled,
The Ella E. Flemings School
has been used and excerpted from to write this article.

(For more details about Ella and the School's history, Bill Pavao's book is still available.
Please see the last page of this newsletter for information on how to purchase a copy.)

National Women's History Month, honorary observance of the month of March in the United States, as designated in 1987 by the U.S. Congress, in recognition of women's many accomplishments throughout history. A variety of agencies, schools, and organizations observe the month by focusing on the "consistently overlooked and undervalued" role of American women in history. Libraries and communities promote special events that emphasize the achievements of women. Similar monthlong observances occur in other countries.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Womens-History-Month>.



The Ella E. Flemings School Book:

by **Bill Pavao**

TO ORDER A COPY OF THIS 400+ PAGE BOOK:

EMAIL: vpres@tewksburyhistoricalsociety.org

Thanks to the author, Bill Pavao,
the Tewksbury Historical Society
will receive profits on books that we sell.

The price for the book is \$20.00. Cash or Check

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Board of Directors and Members serve as volunteers.

All Donations and Membership dues go directly to maintaining the Society's collections, archive materials, storage costs, postage and stationery.

If you want to become a member, donate or merely to learn more about the Tewksbury Historical Society, please see the contacts listed on the left, send in the above form or check our websites below.