

# History of

## G. H. Hopkins Elementary School

On Sunday, January 27, 1985, a new Gwinnett County elementary school was dedicated to the memory of a respected educator, George Harrison Hopkins. Descendants of Mr. Hopkins were present at the ceremony to unveil a portrait given to the school named in his honor, G. H. Hopkins Elementary School.

George Harrison Hopkins is remembered as the first schoolmaster in the Pinckneyville militia district. He and his wife, Lucinda, lived on property in the South Beaver Ruin Creek area, which is known today as Hillcrest Road in Norcross. From 1830 to 1860, Mr. Hopkins 'contracted' with local area parents to hold classes in the Goshen meeting house, which was located on what is known today as the corner of Indian Trail and Beaver Ruin roads in Norcross.

Mr. Hopkins also served as a tax collector in Gwinnett County and as a representative to the State Legislature. But it was his dedication to the educational growth of a young Gwinnett County that inspired the inscription on his grave:

'He taught his thousands how to read

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 1315 Dickens Road  
Lilburn, GA 30047

The following have served as principals of G. H. Hopkins Elementary School:

1984–1988	Hugh May
1988–1991	Judy Graham
1991–1992	Gloria Martin
1992–1998	Connie Hoyle
1998–2003	Laurie Allison
2003–2009	Pagie Ryals
2009–Present	Penny Clavijo

**School Colors:** Blue and White

**School Mascot:** The Hawks

Historian: Pagie Ryals

and not a single one to ere  
He sowed the truth as golden seed  
and taught the young their God to fear.'



The school named in his honor, G. H. Hopkins Elementary, is located at 1315 Dickens Road in Lilburn. The school is on a triangular section of land bound by Burns Road, Dickens Road, and Indian Trail Road. This location is two miles south of I-85, on what would be the site of Mr. Hopkins' Goshen meeting house school.

Funded by a 1982 bond issue, Hopkins Elementary was built to relieve the overcrowded conditions at nearby Rockbridge, Lilburn, and Beaver Ridge elementary schools. Hopkins opened its doors on Monday, August 27, 1984. The original projected enrollment for Hopkins Elementary's 1984–85 opening year was 831 students; school began with 950 students and the year ended with 1,025 kindergarten through fifth-grade students! These figures would have been quite a shock to G. H. Hopkins, whose Goshen meeting house attendance records showed an enrollment of 54 boys and 3 girls during his time there.

Rapid growth in the Lilburn area has continued to play a significant role in the development of Hopkins Elementary. A February 1986 bond referendum passed in Gwinnett County provided for the addition of six new classrooms and one workroom. This bond referendum also funded the building of a new school, Rebecca Minor Elementary, to relieve Hopkins and Bethesda elementary schools. But the school was 85 percent overcrowded again in 1988. A referendum passed in February of 1988 provided funds for the addition of seven to nine new classrooms and expanded parking and cafeteria space. The renovations were completed in the 1989–90 school year.

All of the children at Hopkins Elementary are known as 'the Hawks.' The school mascot was chosen when Dr. Robert Clark met with the new Hopkins students from Lilburn and Beaver Ridge elementary schools in the spring of 1984. He asked for their help in choosing the school mascot and colors. They also chose blue and white as the school colors.

Although Dr. Clark was the first designated principal of Hopkins Elementary, he accepted the position of assistant superintendent of Marietta City Schools in July of 1984, and Hugh May took on the task of opening the school. This was not a new challenge for Mr. May, for he had also opened J. G. Dyer and R. D. Head elementary schools. Mr. May is remembered as always referring to Hopkins as a "family." In 1988, he left Hopkins Elementary School to open a record-breaking fourth school, Cedar Hill Elementary in Lawrenceville.

When Hopkins first opened in August 1984, the construction schedule was extremely tight. Teachers met

for pre-planning at Lilburn Elementary and were not able to get into the new school until the Friday before school opened on Monday. A corps of parent volunteers and teachers' families worked hard all weekend to help the teachers get their classrooms ready in time. Motorists driving by the school that weekend were treated to an unusual sight: teachers wheeling their personal school supplies from their cars to the building in shopping carts borrowed from the local K-Mart. The weekend was very hectic, but spirits were high. And thanks to all the help, the school opened on time Monday morning, ready for the excited new 'Hawks.'

The population of Hopkins Elementary has certainly changed through the years. Today, Hopkins Elementary enjoys a rich diverse population with more than half the students speaking a second language. There are currently 26 languages spoken at Hopkins with the most predominant language being Spanish.

In 2003, Hopkins Elementary underwent a complete renovation to the interior of the existing building gaining a larger media center, cafeteria, and office area. In addition to the renovation, a three-story addition was added, which included 43 classrooms. Students from Meadowcreek Elementary School were rezoned to Hopkins Elementary the following school year forming one of the largest elementary schools in Gwinnett County with almost 1,800 students.

Hopkins Elementary continues to provide the school's diverse student population a quality education, helping each one of their students reach their individual potential.