

JEFFERSON IN RETROSPECT

Written by Walter N. Nichols Class of 1931

On the 50th anniversary of the first graduating class of 1923.

June 9, 1973

The closure of the one room schoolhouse and the inconvenience of traveling to Blanchester for a High School diploma were key factors for building a centralized school to house pupils in Jefferson Township.

The movement to centralize schools in the township began with turmoil and precipitated many hard feelings during the formative period of school unionization. The Midland board members believed the school should be built in Midland because it was the practice, that in school closure, for the township children to attend the school in the villages. The Jefferson Township Board, who operated the Westboro and other one room schools, opposed this view. They believed the school should be built in Westboro, the township voting center. Result – official hearings were held, petition and counter petitions filed, and one district court case was held as an outgrowth of an encounter, actually a fight in the Westboro IOOF Hall, between certain members of opposing factors.

Records available in the office of county schools reveal the following transactions of events which lead to the development of a certain centralized district for the township.

November 1, 1915

A petition from certain taxpayers of Jefferson Township School District requested to be transferred from Jefferson Township School District to the Midland Village School District was presented to the county board. Representatives from each school board were present to discuss the matter.

December 13, 1915

President E. E. Haines stated that the meeting was called for the purpose of studying school conditions in Jefferson-Midland District relative

to getting together if the above named district.

Five petitions, containing 79 names of electors from Jefferson Township were presented, requesting that the location of the school building to be constructed be located between Midland and Westboro.

Discussion followed pro and con. Before adjournment the Jefferson Township Board made a request of County Auditor J.F. Doan for an opinion on status of school affairs.

September 5, 1916

Petition

We, the qualified electors of Midland Village School District, hereby petition the County Board to transfer Midland Village School to Jefferson Township School District provided proposed new school house be located approximately halfway between Midland and Westboro Village. Petition accepted.

With neither district alone having sufficient duplicate pupils to maintain a first grade high school, but by uniting the two districts better school conditions will be made possible, therefore the County Board instructs the Clerk to transfer the Midland Village School to the Jefferson Township School District as per petition. Dated effective November 18, 1916, 10:45 a.m.

Clerk's records of the school were destroyed with the burning of the Tom Conner residence in the early forties, which prevents official documentation of the roster for the Board of Education during the formation period of the school. Through questioning of certain citizens, it is determined that Ephriam Miller, Tom Conner, Jacob Chamberlain, Frank Crist, and Harry Hall were the elected officials to construct a school according to the September 5, 1916 resolution mandating certain stipulations.

Funds were required to construct a building. Voters approved two separate bond issues amounting to \$62,000 used primarily for construction with an inadequate amount left over for equipment.

The exact date of ground breaking is not known. On Monday, November 6, 1922, the News Journal carried an article entitled "JEFFERSON SCHOOL NEARS COMPLETION." Excerpts are:

The new building, which is located on the Midland-Westboro Pike halfway between the two villages, was the cause of several court battles between different taxpayers of the township, and the building was held up for some time until a final settlement was made. The new school building was constructed by the Dewey Brothers Company of Blanchester assisted by F.A. Garner of Lynchburg, and is considered the most modern and best equipped school building in the county.

The building is 102 feet frontage and 115 feet deep and more than 100 carloads of material were consumed in its construction -- which is of a fire proof character.

Thirty cars of gravel and sand and four cars of cement were used in the concrete work.

Big, roomy, airy classrooms are on either side of the corridor with a seating capacity of from 40 to 50 pupils.

Directly west of the front entrance is the big gymnasium -- 40 by 60 feet, where the young people can engage in volleyball, basketball, and other indoor sports.

The supporting beams over the gymnasium are a network of the Goldsmith type re-encored concrete, each weighing about 15 tons.

The carpentry has been under the immediate direction of A.J. Thornburg, an expert in his line, and it is all tip-top. The plastering and cement work which is of high grade, was supervised by Page and Son. The painting and varnishing, in keeping with the rest of the work, was cared for by Walter Swartz and helpers.

Tuesday November 21, 1922 - News Journal

The splendid new centralized school building in Jefferson Township, located midway between Westboro and Midland City, and serving both villages and entire township is now occupied.

The school opened with 210 pupils enrolled from first grade through high school.

High School Faculty: Superintendent C.L.Scott; Miss Helen Carey and

Hazel Osborne. Grade School: Ethel Frazier, 1st and 2nd grade; Bernice Osborn, 3rd and 4th grade; John Rost, 5th and 6th grade; and Mrs. Emma Collins, 7th and 8th grade.

Van Drivers: Fred Osborn, W. D. Wallace, C. L. Scott, Ira Andrews, and Frank Snead. Cook: Charles Conner. Janitor: Ephraim Miller

Noteworthy to the first year of operation was the lack of a basketball coach on the high school faculty. Elmer Frazier volunteered to the responsibility as coach and laid the foundation for the teams future success.

Jefferson's first graduating class of 1923 consisted of Mabel Barbour, Ada Hesler, Elsie Hixon, Anna Johnson, Guy Ray, and Freda Taylor.

In 1924, R. B. Duke, stern and respected disciplinarian became Superintendent and Herbert Williams became principal. Mr. Williams, in addition to his teaching duties, found time to organize an orchestra and coach the basketball team.

1925 highlights included the employment of a Vocal Music Teacher, Ethel Simcox and Mr. Williams coached the basketball team to their first trophy by capturing third place in the New Vienna Invitational.

Smith-Hughes Agriculture was introduced into the school curriculum in 1926 under the leadership of Mathias Drake.

The first student death occurred in the school's brief history where in February, 1928, Opal Van Meter, a sophomore and talented musician, died following a brief illness.

Jefferson employed a woman superintendent, Elizabeth Chaney, in 1927-28. Carl Boring, Wilmington College Athletic star, and talented referee for the county, was employed as Principal and Coach.

Carl Boring's employment introduced into Jefferson's history a period that can justly be described as the Wonderful Five Years of the Boring Basketball Era.

An array of talented boys were inspired by Coach Boring and they responded to his techniques as coach and teacher by winning five consecutive County Basketball Tournament Championships beginning in 1928 and his team earned the distinguished honor of playing in the semi-

finals of the 1930 state tournament, a record still unequaled in the annuals of modern Clinton County basketball.

Jefferson was defeated in the state tournament by Lancaster St. Mary's by a score of 20-13. Roy King who as reported by sports writer Kroger Babb, scored nine points and played excellent ball defensively to merit his being named on the All Ohio Class B Tournament Team, the highest recognition obtainable in Ohio School basketball. The record book of the Ohio High School State Tournaments "Sweet 16" also named John Savage on the Class B team.

A.D. Blackburn, known both as an able administrator and excellent teacher of the sciences and Latin, served the school system from 1928-29 through 1932-33. During his administration Cuba school district, which maintained a two year high school, tuitioned their high school students to Jefferson beginning in September 1929.

In addition to Mr. Blackburn the school was administered during those discomforting depression years by Howard Purdue, 1933-1936, H. Ray Wagner 1937, and Carl Boring 1938-39-40.

Noteworthy, within the thirties, is the graduation class of 1936 so recorded as the largest in alumni history and also credited, by hand-me-down rumor as the omeriest.

Unfortunately, during the decade of the thirties, school records of all graduates prior to 1932 were destroyed and official transcripts of credit vanished with this act of irresponsibility.

The opening years of the forties introduced the dreadful war that began its toll upon the educational strength of the school.

J. Forrest Burns, employed as Superintendent in 1941, tried to recapture the schools hay days of the thirties but the priorities of the time, war preparations, overshadowed the need of education.

By the summer of '42 all faculty members, except one high school and one grade school teacher, had resigned. Smith-Hughes Agriculture was lost, Cuba withdrew to consolidate with Martinsville. Financially Jefferson School was broke and an excellent superintendent accepted a similar post,

with better pay, in a neighboring county.

Walter Nichols was employed as superintendent in 1942 to "pick up the pieces" and restore, as best one could, some semblance of a school program to a deserving group of students caught up in a period of time when their welfare was not necessarily considered a part of national interest.

School during the war years operated as an educational cooperative. Students conducted paper drives, scrap iron drives, harvested victory gardens, performed clerical duties for ration boards, and those with leadership qualities were selected to conduct the orchestra, organize intramurals, assist in labs, and in general, aid teachers and superintendent when needed.

Stimulated by variety of unplanned school experiences many graduates of the war years enrolled in colleges to pursue different kinds of degrees of which a sizable number later became outstanding teachers and administrators of today.

In the late forties, a sad day occurred for the students when they found, upon arrival to school, that our display case containing the trophies of memorable wins, was stolen. To date a mystery still lingers as to the whereabouts of these original cups. Replacements were purchased that did, in some measure, offset the sorrow of this nostalgic loss.

During the fifties, under the superintendency of Mike Disko, 1952-1955, and Vernon Blankenship 1956-1959, it became evident, despite added facilities to the present building, that the high school could not continue to exist under conditions of increasing state standards, demanding greater variety in programs, a shortage of certified teachers, inadequate resources and small enrollment.

Yet, during this period of uncertainty, the boys of the Red and White, under the coaching of Glenn Osborn, Class of 1945, made their final charge on the hardwood and proved themselves champions when David Garrison, on a February Saturday night in 1959, fired a jump shot, from way back,

with three seconds to play, to defeat the famed Devoe - Fields combination of Port William 53-52 to win the school's 6th and final county tournament.

January 1, 1960 Jefferson Township Board of Education was officially disbanded and consolidated with the Blanchester School System.

Today the Jefferson building is an important component of a growing school system. Housed within these sturdy Jefferson walls are 400 romping children coming to her from all over the Blanchester District attending kindergarten through fourth grade.

Hopefully, someday when these children become as you and I they will display their love by honoring this gathering place of their youth in the year of 2023 as we do on this unforgettable Ninth day of June, 1973.