

Well, something for a snowstorm to have shown
The country's singing strength thus brought together,
That though repressed and moody with the weather,
We was nonetheless there ready to be freed
And sing the wildflowers up from root and seed.

— Robert Frost
last verse from
"Our Singing Strength"

Northwood Center
13 Mile at Woodward
Royal Oak

K-Mart Center
7 Mile at Farmington Rd.
Livonia

Eastland Mall
8 Mile at Kelly Rd.
Harper Woods

McDeritt
478-0707

Universal Mall
12 Mile at Dequindre
Warren

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Enrollment dilemma shakes schools

By SUE ROSIEK

While business may be booming in western Wayne and southwestern Oakland counties, school districts, with few exceptions, are registering serious decreases in student population.

Garden City, Wayne-Westland, South Redford, Redford Union, Livonia and Farmington school districts each reported decreases this year. And school officials expect the trend to continue for at least the next five years.

In most cases the decline has signaled the closing of school buildings. But districts in these areas have been fortunate. Few schools which have closed their doors to local pupils remain vacant. Most buildings have been either leased or sold.

In some cases student declines have been staggering.

Garden City School District, which currently has 8,900 students, estimates it will lose nearly 900 students next fall. According to long range projections, in 1982 the district will have only 5,400 students. A far cry from some 14,000 students at its peak year 1968.

Garden City is the 40th among 500 school districts' with largest.

The severe enrollment drop has prompted trust schools but only a vacant. Schoolcraft College, one of the district's buildings, is the 40th among 500 school districts' with largest.

Northville Public Schools use another building for adult education programs. One building, sold to a local church, has reopened as a church affiliated school. The fourth school is used for storage.

Garden City is set to close two more schools this June. However, Wayne County Intermediate School District (WCISD) has agreed to use one for special programs. The city is eyeing another school as a community center.

A sharp contrast to Garden City is the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools which has seen its student membership rolls soar in the past few years.

Fall 1977 projections showed Plymouth-Canton Schools will receive some 5,500 new students over the next five years. In 1977 student population was about 14,450 and school officials expect it to reach 17,000 by 1979 and probably peak at 20,000 in 1980.

Based on 1977 data, between 4,000-5,000 homes were set for construction in Plymouth and Canton townships in the next five years producing one public school student per household.

Because of the expanded pupil population, modular scheduling is being scrapped at the high school level in "radical scheduling. School say modular scheduling allows students free time for independent study and offers a variety of electives.

Now that space is needed, free space for seminars and independent study may be converted for classrooms. Electives have been cut and Plymouth-Canton students are on a five day week six-credit per day schedule.

While school officials in Garden City are studying ways to wind down,

Plymouth-Canton trustees are pondering how to cope with growth.

However, board members and administrators are being very cautious about new buildings.

Defeat of a 1977 bond issue for construction also has hammered home the point to school officials. Residents are leeching a lesson from surrounding school districts, which built when enrollment was on the rise and are now faced with empty desks.

That \$29.75 million bond issue, the largest ever asked for by any school district in the state, would have paid for five new elementary schools, two middle schools, portable classrooms and a six-room addition to an existing elementary building.

Since the defeat, Plymouth-Canton school officials have opted for other solutions to the building crunch. One solution has been year-round school. Before 1977 year-round school was being conducted in one building.

Because of increasing growth to the district, primarily from Canton Township, some six schools now are on year-round scheduling.

Educators say year-round school is educationally superior and practical for a growing district. From an annual operating cost basis it is more expensive because costs include higher utilities, more staff and more buses. Over the long haul, however, Plymouth-Canton school officials note the district won't have the cost of buildings to amortize.

Plymouth-Canton school officials turned down an offer recently from neighboring Livonia School District to lease or buy its empty school buildings.

Plymouth-Canton Supt. John M. Hoben says the offer isn't a ready-made solution to the district's space problems.

"It seems like it might answer some of our needs but it also raises a lot of questions," added Hoben.

He said one major problem is money since the district hasn't budgeted any funds to either lease or buy vacant Livonia buildings.

Ten Livonia school closings have accompanied the plunge in student population over the past five years and more are expected. Two schools, structurally outdated, were demolished. Eight others are used for other purposes.

Wayne County Intermediate School District and Northville Public Schools lease several Livonia buildings for special education programs. Livonia has converted two schools into municipal centers. Westland leases a school for its senior citizens center.

The Livonia School District has recycled one of its buildings and pressed it into service as a career education center.

Three more Livonia schools will close in June, Whitman Junior High School and Wilson and Jackson Elementary schools. Wilson will be converted into a food service center. No plans are slated for the other two buildings.

The worst isn't over for Livonia. Long range projections, issued by Supt. Garver, indicate 10 more schools will have to shut their doors by 1985 when the district's pupil count is expected to hover around 20,000 students.

Also included in the declining enrollment trend is Farmington School District, which has lost some 1,900 students in the past five years and closed four buildings.

Fall enrollment figures show there are 13,942 students attending Farmington Public Schools, 665 students less than last year. That decline nearly doubles last year's loss.

Because of this steep decline, the district next year will implement the middle school concept, transferring ninth graders to the high school level.

Farmington is another example of a district that has pushed its closed school buildings into service. One school is being used for county special education programs.

Another, Farmington Junior High School, is used for the Oakland Training Center. A part of that school will be torn down later this year and a senior citizens housing complex will be built on the site.

Another school is presently used for adult community education but in the near future will be converted into a district court.

The Lutheran High School Association may purchase a Farmington School.

The Farmington School Board will close one more building later this year and so far there are no plans for its alternative use.

Faced with an enrollment count of slightly more than 21,000 students this year—271 students fewer than last year—administrators at Wayne-Westland School District are concerned but not panic stricken.

A school census of pre-school youngsters last fall, however, indicates the declining enrollment trend is sweeping that district.

Enrollment peaked at 24,444 in Wayne-Westland in 1974-75. Since then the district has experienced a drop of 22.7 per cent or 5,189 pupils.

Elementary schools are where the district is feeling the enrollment pinch. On the secondary level, Wayne-Westland is only beginning to suffer a decline, down 401 students since 1971 at the junior high level. It the district's two senior highs, there has been a gain of 627 students.

Supt. Timothy Dyer says the district has managed to avoid staggering losses for two reasons: massive expansion of the continuing education and special education programs.

Dyer says the overall effect has been to keep the district out of a "crisis."

But even though the decline, it is still forced to close schools. Wayne-Westland will close five schools this June and another three within the next few years.

An advisory committee report, issued last fall, shows that the Redford Union School District hasn't escaped the declining enrollment trend.

Redford Union had 9,900 students in 1967. Ten years later, enrollment had slipped to 7,065. Another 1,000 students are expected to be lost by 1979-80. Fall enrollment figures showed Redford Union had 6,482 students, a drop of 484 students from last year.

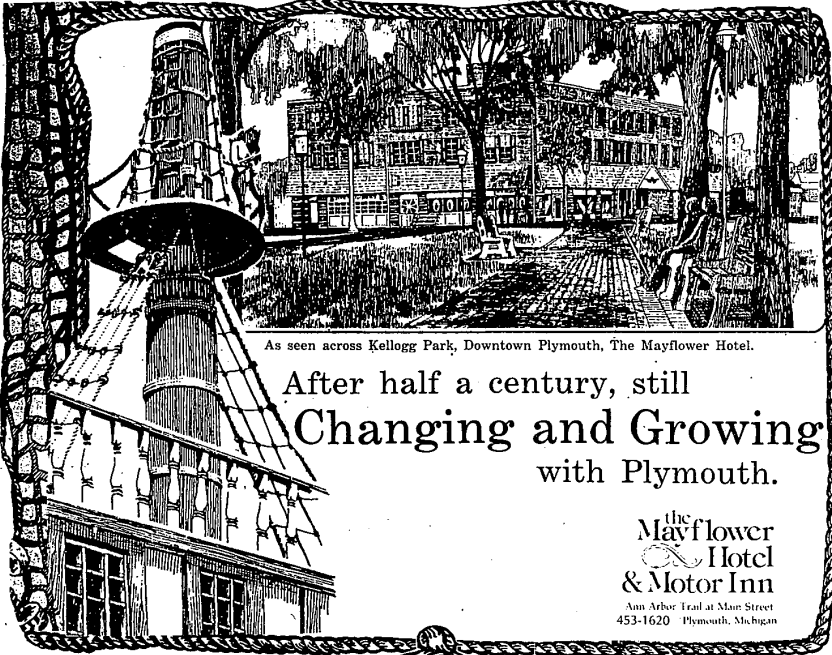
The Redford Union School Board is currently searching for a tenant for one of its elementary schools. If one is found the board will close its first school in June.

South Redford School District rounds out the picture by posting similar enrollment losses.

That district lost 225 students last year, posting a total enrollment of 4,439 students.

Supt. Jan Jacobs says the enrollment decline in that district has been extremely unusual, citing a loss of 4,000 students in the past 14 years.

In that time, four elementary schools have been closed but currently are being used.



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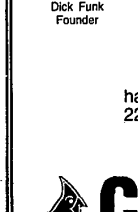
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Mickey Smith
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Dick Funk
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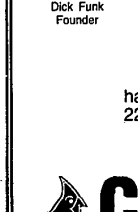
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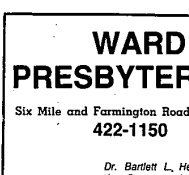
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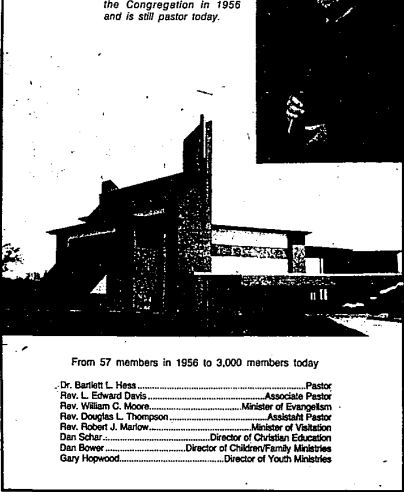
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