

School Development History is Reviewed

Historical Background and Development of The Farmington Public School System.

By KATHRYN BRIGGS

When the early pioneers came to this part of the "Michigan Territory" from Farmington, New York in 1824, they brought with them the idea that "reading, writing, and 'rithmetic'" were necessary. So in 1830 the first school in the community, a tiny log hut, was built. It stood on what is now Shawnee Avenue, but was then just an Indian trail. Farmington's first schoolmaster was Nathan Power, and the first "schoolmarm" was Miss Mary Ann Mead.

In 1835 Nate Power was authorized to build a new school, and was granted \$750 for the job. He built it on the hill above the creek, and it became known throughout the district as "The Little Red Schoolhouse." When this was outgrown, Mr. Power also built the next school in 1837, this being a two-story frame building.

Right next to where the present Farmington Junior High School stands today. This building served as a school until replaced in 1868.

By 1877 there were ten district schools in the township, all of them with one room.

School buildings except in District No. 5 (Farmington Village) where there were two departments, a higher and a lower, respectively in charge of a male teacher and a female teacher. The terms added up to forty weeks per year. The annual salary of the male teacher in the village was one thousand dollars, and that of the female teacher was four hundred dollars. The other districts employed male teachers only in winter, the other terms being taught by females, the remuneration of the former was thirty-five to fifty dollars per month, and of the latter two dollars and fifty cents per week.

The school building which was erected in 1888 was known as the Union School, and was used until destroyed by fire in 1918. The older unit of the Farmington Junior High School site was then built, and has been continuously since.

There, although the interior has been remodeled many times.

PREVIOUSLY to 1888 the school was ungraded, but after that date there were named classes in Farmington High School.

However, one alumna states: "I went to the high school two years. I had covered so much, and my standing was so high from our district school that I finished in two years at the age of 16." In another quotation, another alumna tells about organizing as a Junior Class on April 21, 1897, as Seniors on December 19, 1897, and graduating in June, 1898.

There were three members in the first class to be graduated in the new "graded" set-up, holding their exercises in June, 1896. (There are approximately 211 Seniors this year, 270 at Farmington Senior High School, and 241 in the first graduating class at North Farmington High School.)

For many years, the district schools outside of the village (later city) of Farmington provided education through the eighth grade. If a student wished to continue his education at a high school, he, per agreement between the Boards of Education, could attend at a tuition student. Sometimes the rural school district would pay the entire amount — in other cases, it would pay part, and parents would make up the difference. The parents provided transportation, or the students walked or drove. They did not ride in any particular class, the one which was most convenient, or had room for them.

Consequently there were students from Farmington rural schools attending not only Farmington High School, but also Northville, Redford, Walled Lake, Pontiac, and even Detroit.

BY 1914 there were six school districts (in addition to some fractional parts that were parts of other systems such as Clawsonville or Walled Lake). There were the Farmington High School and Farmington Grade School at the present Farmington Junior High site; the Noble District with the Noble School on Middlebelt Road between Nine and Ten Mile Roads and the Noble School on Shawnee's Road near Middlebelt Road; the Bond School District with the original German School on Middlebelt Road between 13 and 14 Mile Roads and the Bond School at Orchard Lake Road and 13 Mile Road; the Fairview School District with its one-room school on West Grand River; the West Farmington School District having its building on Twelve Mile Road and Halsted

Road. The Thayer District (Nine Mile and Halsted roads) and the Noble District (Farmington and Thayer roads) existed as separate districts, but sent all their students at tuition students to Farmington.

In 1924, after much work, planning, the districts voted to form a Consolidated School District—and so now we have (other than adjustments, straightening of boundaries, and "horse-trading") the present Farmington Public School District.

AFTER consolidation a few of the one and two room schools were used for self-contained kindergarten units, but as large, new elementary schools were built, the kindergarten classes were housed with the older students. The West Farmington and German School districts have now a busy store, and the latter houses the Mayfield Nursery School. The Noble School was recently remodeled and contains the offices of the Special Education Department. In 1956 the two-room William Grace School was torn down and a modern twenty-room building was erected on its site. The Fairview and Nichols buildings are used for storage.

With the development of many subdivisions and the houses being built in clusters rather than on existing main roads, the building policy of the Board of Education changed from the placement of elementary schools on main arteries and intersections to the present policy of choosing sites that are in or near the center of the sections. This provides for better walking conditions and a keeps the schools away from congested, high-traffic areas, as well as giving the citizens the feeling of having a neighborhood school.

THE FARMINGTON School District has been a leader in the field of Special Education. Back in the 1920's there were "Opportunity Rooms" where the slower-learning, later-elementary students were given individualized instruction and remedial work in the basic subjects. With the depression and change of administration, these were discontinued.

In 1935, "Special Education," as we now know it, began with itinerant speech correctionists. More and more services have been added until now it is a department with a director, seven speech correctionists, four visiting teachers, two school diagnosticians, a teacher counselor of the physically handicapped and one for the mentally handicapped, a teacher for the homebound, seven who have rooms for the mentally retarded, five who work with the orthopedically handicapped, a teacher of the pre-school deaf children, and three teachers of the Adjusted Study program. This is a county-wide program, and there is close cooperation between Farmington and other surrounding districts.

THE PHYSICAL development of the pupils is provided by physical education teachers for the elementary schools as well as for the secondary schools. Intramural and competitive sports provide outlets for physical activity, growth, and development.

The above-average and brilliant students have not been neglected. In the secondary schools there are accelerated and advanced courses available in the Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, and Drafting departments. Many of the graduates have entered college with advanced standing.

The high schools have been an international-minded center, having participated in the American Field Service and a Michigan Council of Churches Foreign Exchange Student program since 1956. So far, twenty foreign students from Mexico, Indonesia, France, Switzerland, Germany, Chile, Costa Rica, Holland, Finland, Belgium, Japan, and Sweden have spent time here at Farmington. The present visitors to Farmington High School are from Italy, Germany, and Finland and the present first exchange student to North Farmington High School is from Cairo, Egypt. To date nineteen students from Farmington have lived during the summer with families in Turkey, Mexico, Germany, France, Norway, Netherlands, Finland, and Spain.

Because of the burgeoning enrollment due to the development of many subdivisions in the township and city, new schools and new personnel have constantly been needed. The following statistics will help emphasize the great growth that has taken place since 1914. At the time of consolidation, there were 1,807 students from kindergarten through the

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Farmington Adult Education Classes Double In Enrollment This Year Over '62

Since taking over the direction of the Farmington District Adult Education Program in January of this year, Richard Tyler has already witnessed a phenomenal growth in the number enrolled and in the course offerings for Farmington adults.

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which is more than double the total number of adults who were enrolled in courses during the two semesters of the 1962-63 school year.

This semester there are courses being taught with the response so great for two of the courses, bridge and short-hand, that two classes had to be set up to accommodate all of the people who enrolled in each of those courses.

The size of each class is held to a maximum of 30 students to allow the instructors an opportunity to work individually with each person when necessary. As few as 15 persons or less generally make up an Adult Education class.

ADULT EDUCATION Director Tyler hopes to see the program expand to take in many more persons and cover an ever-widening variety of courses and subjects.

The facilities of the School District can easily handle further expansion for this self-supporting program, Tyler pointed out, and use of the total building during the evening presents no problem since maintenance crews are on duty during that time. The normal costs connected with having the classrooms made available for the Adult Education Program are assumed by the Board of Education.

The Adult Education Program is attempting to meet the following needs:

1. Assist adults at various life-development stages to fulfill the differing roles in worthy home membership — including that of the older adult and of the retiree.

2. Stimulate civic consciousness and the exercise of effective citizenship responsibilities, National, State, and Local.

3. Promote the worthy use of leisure through opportunities to acquire recreational, cultural, and appreciation abilities.

4. Offer a program whereby both young and old drop-outs can finish their secondary education.

Registrations will be accepted on the night of the first class, Tuesday, November 19, at 7 p.m., at Farmington Senior High School. Mail registrations will be accepted until November 15. For further information call Farmington Adult Education, 476-0810.

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5. Provide leadership and service to citizens who are trying to solve community problems.

"This type of program is based on Communication with Community. Efforts are being made to increase and improve interaction as the Adult Program should be deeply involved in Community life and activities of the local groups in a program which serves every segment of the Community and school system," Tyler said.

FUTURE EVENTS

Next Semester — Proposed new classes:

Advanced Bridge

Golf

Business Machines

Knitting

Bishop Sewing II

JANUARY 15 AND 16

Adult Education Exhibit and Registration for Second Semester, which begins January 20.

Registr