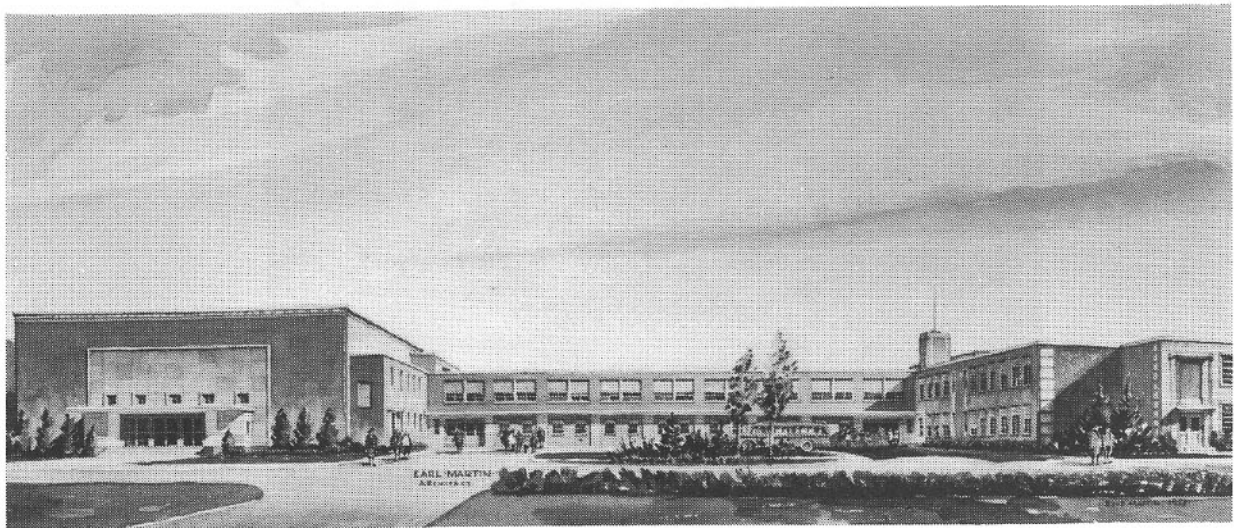




James D. Baker (*Frontier Class of '52*)
Hamburg Town Historian

October 4, 2002

A HISTORY OF THE FRONTIER SCHOOL DISTRICT



Looking at the bus circle, Frontier High School 1955

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Pictured above at the Junior-Senior High School ground breaking ceremony, January 1953 are from left to right, Vernon Heiman, John Kleis, Ernest Hoeldke and Charles Buesch.

This year the Frontier Central school community will celebrate the District's 50th year. With this in mind, the Frontier Central Alumni Association's Anniversary committee as part of the anniversary celebration thought it a good idea to take a step into the past and trace the school's history during its first half century. As a member of the committee and as Hamburg Town Historian, I was elected to do the job.

Like most high school graduates, I have fond memories of graduation day. It was on June 23, 1952 that I walked across the small stage at the old Blasdel High School to receive my diploma from board member, Henry Leyh and principal Charles Buesch. At the time, I certainly wasn't thinking and probably didn't care that as a member of that class, I was making history as a graduate of the first senior class of the new Frontier school system.

Little did I know that 50 years later, I spent as a teacher at Frontier High School, I would be sitting down to research my office files, to ask questions of many people, and to search a fading memory in an attempt to chronicle the early history of the school. It should be noted that this is simply "an attempt", and is not meant to be a definitive study. However, my hope is that the reader will find it both informative and somewhat enjoyable.

I must admit, most people think that history in general and the school's history in particular really has little relevance. However, whether you agree or not, historians believe that what they do is important, that it has meaning. The recording of history, whether family genealogy, the history of a town or the history of a school, has value for the lessons to be learned from it.

The growth and progress of the Frontier School District in the last fifty years is truly extraordinary, and so, as you turn the pages of this account, of its early history, my hope is that it will give you a better understanding of how far we have come as a district, from the early system with its 2500 youngsters and a few employees to the fourth largest public school system in Erie County. I would also hope that the reading will give you some appreciation for the contributions of the District's early pioneers, people of vision, who took the steps to ensure and shape the future of our school well into the 21st Century.

In the decade following World War II, the United States entered a period of unprecedented prosperity. It was a period when science and technology sent the economy spiraling upward. Local companies like Bethlehem Steel and Ford Motor were able to offer America's returning servicemen "full employment". With the security of a good paying job, many of these men in the post war years married early and had large families. The resulting growth in the nation's population was spectacular. During the Depression years, the country's population increased by 9 million, in the 1940's it rose by 19 million and throughout the 1950's by 28 million.

The many changes that transformed American life after the War placed a heavy burden on the nation's schools. The growth of population alone became the most serious problem for

Districts, as they now had to return to the drawing board to find space for the post war "Baby Boom". Schools in Western New York were no exception.

The schools in the Town of Hamburg, many already under pressure with crowded facilities, now looked to "centralization" as a way to alleviate the overcrowding. The State Education Department had for some time encouraged the "Central School Plan", promising increased state aid, including aid for transportation and a 30% increase in building funds as an inducement to local districts to centralize. With these added incentives, Town of Hamburg schools soon joined the movement to "centralization".

As early as June 1950, a proposal was made to establish a "Lake Shore" School District to include the Athol Springs, Lake View, Shaleton, Wanakah and Woodlawn schools. This was followed in the spring of 1951 with a proposal to merge the Blasdell, Big Tree, West Seneca No. 5 and part of the Lackawanna City District.

When the voters in West Seneca No. 5 rejected that plan, district superintendent Andrew Beam was notified by the State Education Department that Blasdell and Big Tree would now be placed in the proposed Lake Shore District. (Mr. Beam's supervisory district included Blasdell, Big Tree, Woodlawn, West Seneca and part of Cheektowaga).

The plan to consolidate the eight former school districts was now in place and a date was set for late June 1951, to give district voters a chance to decide the fate of the proposal. If approved, the new central school would include the following town school districts, Amsdell No. 9, Athol Springs No. 10, Big Tree No. 7, Blasdell No. 8, Lake View No. 12, Shaleton No. 4, Wanakah No. 5 and Woodlawn No. 13.

As with most public plans of this magnitude, there was some opposition to the project. Some residents in the Wanakah District, for example, were opposed because they had already had plans on the drawing board for an expansion of their school building. However, on June 28, 1951, the voters in the eight districts overwhelmingly approved the centralization plan by a vote of 1301 to 685. It might be mentioned that neighboring Hamburg schools were also centralized in 1951.

The first order of business for the new school district was to elect a school board. Superintendent Beam announced that the State Education Department had given approval for a meeting to be held on July 17, 1951 at the Athol Springs School to elect a nine member board. The newly elected board included John Kleis of Big Tree, John Barber of Athol Springs, F. Robert Greene of Lake View, Howard Durni of Shaleton, Henry Leyh of Blasdell, George Kennerdell of Blasdell, Harold Mathis of Woodlawn and Homer Rowe of Amsdell. Kleis became President and Greene Vice-President. It had been agreed beforehand that all districts would be represented on the board.

One of the board's first jobs was to give the district a name. It will be recalled that the Lake Shore name had already been taken by the former Angola School District. As a result, the board decided to conduct a contest in cooperation with the Erie County Herald newspaper

and offered a \$25.00 bond to a person with the winning entry. However, none of the entries appeared suitable, and the board chose the name "Frontier".

According to present board member, Stan Figiel, the idea for the name came from the old Frontier telephone exchange used during that period. (Those of you who are old enough might remember dialing the "Triangle", "Emerson", and "Woodlawn" exchanges). The name was officially approved in September 1951 as the new Frontier Central School District greeted 2,492 children when they returned to classes at the system's nine buildings.

At the time of centralization, the Board appointed the two former Principals at Blasdell and Woodlawn High Schools, Mr. Charles Buesch and Mr. Vernon Heiman, as Co-Principals of the new District. Mr. Buesch was to oversee instruction, Mr. Heiman, Administration.

In the next two years other administrative appointments would be made, some as late as 1955, when the new Frontier High School opened on Bayview Road. These included Mr. Francis Manley, former building principal at Woodlawn as Co-ordinator of Elementary Education, Mr. Alton Dunklin as Assistant District Administrator, Marvin Mandel as Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Elma Titus as Guidance Counselor, Ruth Pray, former building principal at Blasdell as Child Accountant, and Leslie Hawley as Adult Education Director.

When the new High School building was opened, Wilbur Morganfeld was appointed as High School Principal and Marion Creedon as Junior High School Principal. It should also be noted that, Frontier at that time, was in the first Supervisory District of Erie County and Mr. Ernest Hoeldke was its Superintendent.

From almost the first month of the District's existence, the Board of Education had to deal with the overcrowded conditions in building classrooms. With this in mind, a request was sent to the State Education Department requesting a study and report on the districts building needs. On the basis of that report, the Board proposed building a new Junior-Senior High School on Bayview Road for grades 7-12, and a new Elementary School at the Pinehurst site just off Lake Shore Road near Lake View.

Although the sites for the new buildings were not popular with some residents, the vote on the building program was held and approved on March 27, 1953. The new schools were opened to their first students in 1955. Pinehurst was opened in February of that year and Frontier in September. The first class of seniors to graduate from the new high school was the class of 1956.

However, it should also be mentioned that the first senior class to graduate as students of Frontier Central was the class of 1952. There were 62 graduates in that class, and the students at that time were still housed in the old Blasdell and Woodlawn buildings. The classes of '53, '54 and '55 also used the old school buildings until the move to the new Frontier High School in the fall of 1955.

In 1956, just one year after the opening of Frontier's two new schools, district enroll-

ment had grown by more than 55%. In the elementary schools alone, population had moved beyond capacity by more than 550 students and more growth was predicted. As a result, the School Board proposed the building of two 990 student elementary schools, one in Blasdell and the other at Cloverbank. These facilities were opened in 1959. It was also in 1959 that overcrowding in the new Junior-Senior High School required that the old Blasdell High School building be converted to a Junior High to house all of the District's seventh grades. Mr. Leslie Hawley, former teacher and Adult Education Director was named Principal.

As the decade of the 1960's loomed on the horizon, more changes would come and have long lasting effects on the Frontier School System. In 1960, Mr. Buesch would retire due to ill health. He had been in education for over 35 years as a science teacher and as a football and basketball coach at Hamburg High School before coming to Blasdell as Principal.

In the 1960-61 school year, the Frontier Board now had to reorganize its Central Office Administration. They did so by appointing Mr. Heiman as District Principal and then hired Doctor Robert Starr from the Lyndonville School System to be Assistant District Principal. It was also at this time that Laurens (Joe) Dietz was appointed as the district's first Director of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Athletics. One year later, former science teacher, Paul Carrigg would be named Administrative Assistant for Secondary Instruction, and; in 1964, the Board would create another "first" for the system by appointing Serafino Grottanelli as Senior High School Assistant Principal.

As those appointments were being made, and after just ten years as a Central School System, enrollment had grown to about 5400, an increase of 115%, and indications were that by the end of that decade the school population would reach 7000. It may also be of interest to some that it was in 1961 when Frontier sport teams switched their mascot from the "Frontiersmen" to the "Falcons".

With those 1961 figures as ammunition, the Board once again went to the voters to ask for approval of another building project, a new Junior High School. The voters approved the proposition on May 8, 1963 and the Amsdell Junior High School was opened for students and staff on September 8, 1965. Mr. Hawley moved over from Frontier Junior High to take control of the new building and Paul Carrigg was later named as his Assistant.

As it turned out, those 1960's enrollment projections were right on target, as residential building in the district continued to grow causing an increase in student population. By the start of the 1970's, enrollment was up dramatically and in 1972 it had peaked at 7,200 students. Every building in the District was seriously overcrowded, and to complicate the problem even more, the District's five elementary schools were becoming old and outdated.

With this information in hand, school officials once again went to the voters to seek approval of another building project to address the overcrowded and antiquated buildings. However, the voters were apparently in no mood to approve anything in the 1970's. They rejected two proposals in that decade - one in 1970 and the other for a new building on the Frontier High School site, in 1977.

The rapid and continuing growth of the District did however, move the Board in 1971 to create a separate superintendency for the Frontier Schools, and in doing so, named Vernon Heiman as the District's first Superintendent. Mr. Heiman would remain in the position until his retirement in 1973, completing a 45 year career in education. He had started out as a Social Studies teacher in the Almond Schools and became Principal at Scio before coming to Woodlawn in 1936. Dr. Robert Starr was then appointed Frontier Superintendent in 1974.

As was predicted in the previous decade, the 1980's actually brought a decline in school enrollment to 5,590 students, down by over 1,500 from 1972. However, the failed building proposals of the 1970's were beginning to have serious adverse effects, as several new programs were added in the areas of handicapped and occupational education. The need for more space for these programs and the continuing deterioration of the System's aging elementary schools was a cause for great concern.

With this in mind, the Board, in 1982, authorized another bond for needed renovations and improvements to the District's schools. Energy efficient windows were installed and heating systems improved, a new telephone system was put in place and new smoke and fire alarms were updated at all buildings. This proved to be a stop gap measure, and by the end of the decade, the need for a major building project was obvious.

In 1983, Dr. Starr retired after ten years of steady district progress as the System's Chief School Officer. The Board then hired Dr. Richard Shands from the Niagara-Wheatfield School System to be Frontier's third Superintendent. Dr. Shands led the school district until 1989 when he resigned to take another job outside education.

Beside the changes in leadership at the top, the decades of the 70's and 80's brought about numerous changes in Central Office Administration. The continued growth of the system, its students and employees and new State mandates brought about the need for administrative modifications.

In 1974, Thomas Pfohl, former Guidance Counselor and Administrative Assistant, was named Supervisor of Secondary Education. Patricia Bulger, longtime Elementary Education Supervisor was then appointed Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to replace the retiring Francis Manley. When Mrs. Bulger retired in 1984, Dr. Elizabeth Bradley was named as Curriculum Co-ordinator and later became Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. In 1977, after 47 years in the District as an Assistant Superintendent for Business, Alton Dunklin retired and was replaced by Joseph Meany who came from the Pine Valley School System. When Mr. Meany left in 1988, Dr. Gerald Glose was hired to take his place.

It was also in 1977 that Laurens Dietz stepped down as Director of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and was replaced by former teacher and coach, Ray Rosinski. In 1984, most likely because of the explosion in the number of district employees, Gerald Baldelli was appointed as an Assistant Superintendent for Personnel. He had previously served as a math teacher and coach at the High School and as Principal at the Amsdell and Frontier buildings. Other appointments in the decade included Walter Majewski as Director of Special

Education, probably because of the new State mandates in that area, and Robert Jones as Director of Technology and Media Services. Later computer specialists would be hired to handle the new technology.

The 1980's were also noteworthy for the retirement of two long time District employees. In 1981 Lorraine Bauer Eyman retired after 43 years with the District. She had started in 1937 as secretary to Mr. Heiman at the Woodlawn school, was named clerk at that school in 1948 and when the District was centralized, she was named its first clerk.

Three years later in 1984, Ben Werth, long time office manager at Snyder Tank and the school district's first Treasurer, retired after 34 years with the school system. Mr. Werth also had served as Clerk of the Board for the old Athol Springs School District at a yearly salary of \$50.00. June Plumer replaced Mrs. Eyman as clerk and Lawrence Schaller came from the Maryvale School system to become the school's Treasurer. Schaller later would be appointed as an Administrative Assistant for Finance, and when he left to take an administrative post at Grand Island, Andrew Romanowski was appointed the new Treasurer. The "Treasurer" post today is held by Jim Pelonero.

By the start of the 1990's, the District's building needs had reached the critical stage, and without question the next decade would bring about significant change, not only to District buildings, but also, due to new State graduation standards to the instructional program. It was in that year that Dr. Charles Little was appointed as the new Superintendent. And now besides the problems of the District's already serious building needs, Dr. Little would face an enrollment that was continually rising and was projected to rise steadily through the 1990's. There also seemed to be a genuine concern in the community for the lack of neighborhood schools, an issue which some believed was the cause for some elementary school children to be spending too much time on buses.

As a result of these concerns the Board of Education proposed a \$17.6 million dollar bond issue to provide additions to the Pinehurst and Frontier buildings, to construct a new elementary school at the high school site and to close three aging elementary schools. Having learned from past defeats, the Board this time appointed a marketing committee, and with strong community, teacher and professional and business support, the projects were approved by voters in December 1990.

The construction project, completed in 1993 resulted in the erection of the Big Tree Elementary School and an eight classroom addition to the High School that effectively enclosed the former bus circle. In September 1993, the District was now able to reorganize its instructional program, providing for a friendlier neighborhood school system. The elementary schools would now house grades K-5, the former Junior High grades 6-8, and the former Senior High 9-12.

In 1996, Dr. Little left the District to take another job with a school district in Michigan, and after some reluctance, Dr. Gerald Glose accepted the Board's offer to become the new Superintendent. Glose had come to the District in 1988 from the North Tonawanda

schools as the Assistant Superintendent in charge of Business.

Dr. Glose's first duty as Superintendent was to seek approval for another building project brought on by increasing enrollments. This bond proposal for \$16.7 million dollars was for major additions to Blasdel and Cloverbank Elementary schools and to the Frontier and Amsdell schools. This project was approved overwhelmingly by the voters in March 1996 and the new additions were ready for occupancy in 1998.

After six years at the helm, Dr. Glose retired in July, 2000. The Board then hired an Interim Superintendent, Dr. Vincent Coppola, to handle District affairs until a permanent replacement could be secured. Dr. Coppola, a veteran area administrator, had previously worked in the West Seneca system. He stayed at Frontier until November, 2000 when the Board hired Dr. Gary Cooper from the Sweet Home School system as the new Superintendent.

Dr. Cooper, a native of Angola, is a 23 year veteran educator with a wealth of experience. He had worked in both Delaware and Pennsylvania before taking the job at Sweet Home in 1991. He began his career as a Social Studies teacher and coach, then became an Athletic Director, building Principal, and for the last 11 years a Superintendent.

Perhaps it is appropriate that this year, during the 50th year anniversary celebration, the District will open the new Frontier Community Learning Center on Southwestern Blvd. Originally envisioned by former Superintendent Dr. Gerald Glose as a unique example of school-community cooperation, the new school building will provide a win win situation for Frontier and Hamburg schools along with Erie I BOCES and the Town of Hamburg.

The plan provides that the building will be constructed by the Frontier School District with no added increase in the District's tax rate. Eighty-four per cent of the cost will be absorbed by State Aide. The remaining expense will be picked up by BOCES, the Hamburg schools and the Town of Hamburg who will be renting space in the school.

The facility will house students from the Alternative Education and Occupational Skills Programs who previously had to take a long bus ride to Sweet Home to attend classes. Space will also be provided for a Family Support Center for Frontier and Hamburg schools and room is also set aside for the Hamburg Youth Bureau. The building will also be equipped with a full size gymnasium for Physical Education classes. The new gym also should help to alleviate scheduling problems within the District by providing another facility for use by school athletic teams and community organizations for practices and events.

The construction of this building provides yet another indication of Frontier's commitment to the Community and its desire to provide the best possible education for our students at a reasonable and prudent cost. This school, along with the District's other outstanding facilities, the high quality of its instructional program designed to meet the State's new higher academic standards, and a co-curricular program second to none in the county, has provided the school with a reputation as one of the most highly respected districts in the State.

Using the last 50 years as a model and with the start of the district wide planning process, the school system seems poised to meet the many new challenges that lay ahead in the next 50 years, the first years of the new Millennium.

Since the remainder of this history concerns the original eight districts that comprise the present Frontier School System, and since all schools in New York State are closely tied to the supervision by the State Education Department, I thought it might be helpful here to give a brief resume of the provisions made by the State for early public education.

Before the Revolution there was no general system of education. There were private schools and a few special schools, but the importance of Common Schools had not yet been recognized. Of course at that time, only the wealthy were educated. It wasn't until 1795 that a law was passed to encourage and maintain Common Schools. These schools were to be supported in part by the state, partly by a fee paid by the parents of the children, and also by a property tax levied in the school district.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, school districts were created by a school commissioner who could alter them if necessary. Each district was to have a schoolhouse and a library, and all affairs were to be decided at an annual meeting of all tax paying residents of each locality. It was at this meeting that they were to elect trustees, a clerk, a tax collector and a librarian.

The district meeting was usually called throughout the state on the second Tuesday of October. The major topics discussed included questions of building and repairing schoolhouses, furnishing them, providing materials for teaching and also securing fuel for heating the building. After the meeting was concluded, it was the School Trustee who then was given the power to carry out the decisions of the local taxpayers.

To ensure that there would be a plentiful stockpile of wood for the school's fuel, some Hamburg districts decided that each family would supply one half cord of wood for each child attending school. The wood was due by the first day of February and if it was not on time, a fine of one dollar was charged to the delinquent family.

Although this is a rather short and cursory background for New York State's early public schools, I trust that perhaps it will make the story of Frontier's original eight districts somewhat more meaningful. (Two of the districts were Union Free and six were Common Schools).

Most of the early 20th century rural schools in the Town of Hamburg provided instruction for children in grades one through eight. However, each school probably only had a total of twenty or twenty-five students enrolled in the eight grades. As a result, when the eighth grade youngsters were ready to graduate, all the rural districts in the town who might have had two or three graduates, joined together in a combined commencement.

The program seen below is a photo of an original from the 1916 Graduation of the Town's rural common schools. Notice the six districts that became part of Frontier's centralization. The Grange Hall, site of the ceremony, still stands on Main Street in the Village of Hamburg and at present is home to Tina's Italian Kitchen.

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
OF THE
HAMBURG RURAL SCHOOLS
GRANGE HALL, HAMBURG, N. Y.
Friday, June Twenty-third, 7:45 P. M.

PROGRAM

Opening Chorus—Swing Song.....Water Valley and Big Tree
Invocation.....Rev. A. R. Spencer
Class Song—Hail and Farewell.....Graduates
Salutatory.....James Clark, Water Valley
A Sweet Pea Song.....Grades 1 and 2, Wanakah
The Wood Box.....John Zittel, School No. 11
Folk Dance.....Primary Pupils, Woodlawn
Selected Shaleton
A Kiss in School.....Antoinette Eastman, School No. 3
DialogueArmor
Violin Solo.....Ethel Decker, Lake View
Two Little Twins.....Anna Meyer and Mildred Horn, School No. 9
Song.....Intermediate Department, Woodlawn
Address.....Mr. George H. Frost, Buffalo
Presentation of Diplomas and Perfect Attendance Certificates
Superintendent Henry A. Dann
Good-by Song.....Alpha Brost and Clayton Brost, Athol Springs

Class Motto : Strive to Succeed

Class Colors : Green and White

CLASS

James Clark	Nellie Hastings	Evelyn Weibel
Clarence Taylor	Arthur Ahr	Laura Jeanperrin
Harold Foote	Clemence Eckert	John Fierle
Myrtice Timm	Ethel Decker	Mary Hoffman
Helen Foote	Isabel Weibel	Ralph Breeze
	John Heil	

TEACHERS

Miss Robinson	Miss Johnson	Miss Carter
Miss Stunick	Miss Stapleton	Miss Ronke
Miss Clancy	Miss Ebert	Miss Frary
Miss Ferry	Miss Landon	Miss Andrus
Miss Slater	Miss Thurston	Mr. Patterson
Mr. Heimburg	Mrs. Ralph	

HAMBURG PUB. CO. PRINT

Program is Courtesy of Donald (Duke) Spittler
Lake View Historian

THE EIGHT DISTRICTS

AMSDELL SCHOOL No. 9



The Amsdell Elementary building is one of the oldest school buildings in the Town of Hamburg. The original one room schoolhouse is presently located at 3185 Amsdell Road where Amsdell meets Pleasant Avenue. It's interesting that the building today remains much the same as it was over one hundred years ago.

The first school at the site is believed to have been constructed about 1810. It was just prior to that time that the property was transferred from the Holland Land Company to become part of the John Sly homestead. When Senator Sly donated the land to the Hamburg School District #9, he stipulated that it be used for educational purposes.

Fondly referred to as the "Little Red Schoolhouse" for many years, it was not always red. The first school at the site was made with locally made bricks; and when the bricks deteriorated, the present wood frame building was constructed in about 1868. There was no basement and the front vestibule and stairwells would be added at a later date.

This 1870's school did, however, have a potbellied stove in the center of the classroom and a woodshed for supplying it, two outhouses, a pail and dipper for drinking water and the teacher's desk was set up on a platform at the front of the room. All the early pictures show this post Civil War schoolhouse painted white.

The present cellar was added about 1920 and was dug out and built in two steps. It was at this time that the front vestibule and two stairwells were also added to provide access to the basement, which was divided by a wall into a Girls and Boys side. A coal-fired furnace was then installed and chemical toilets were added in the lavatories.

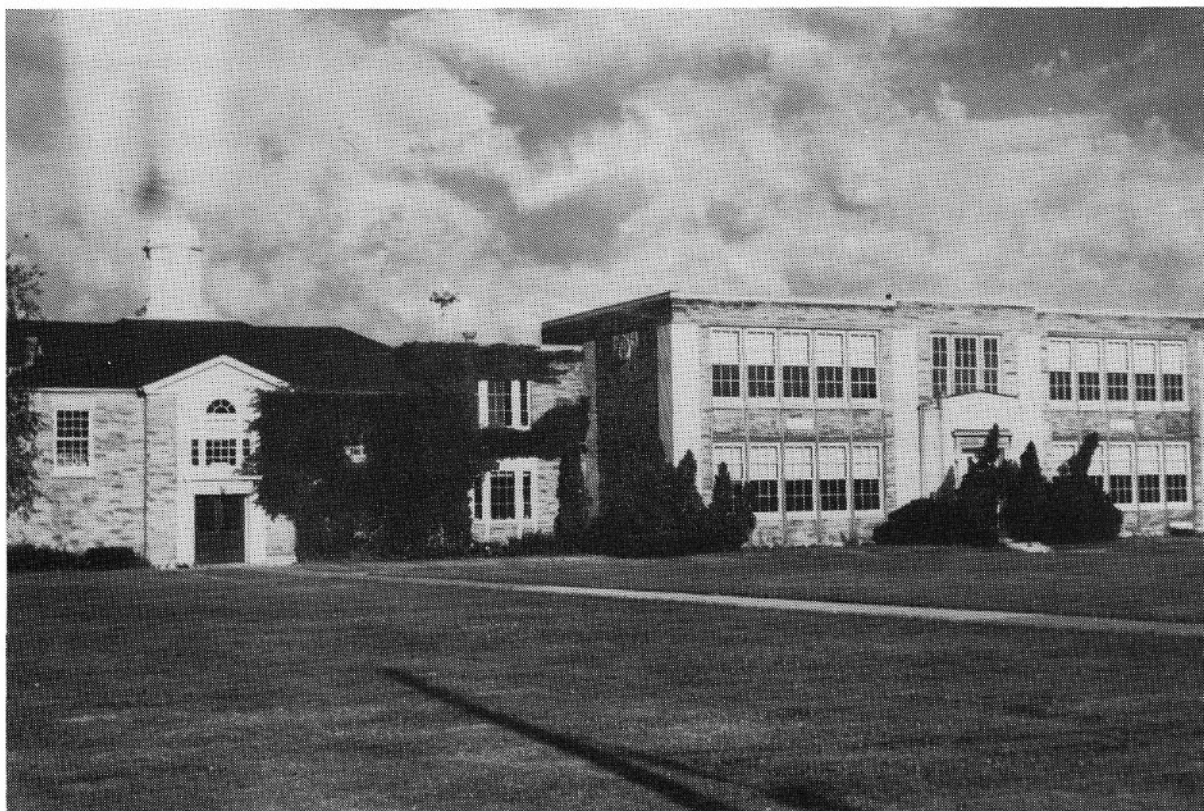
The late Lola Tillner Kimmel, longtime community activist and Hamburg Central teacher, started her career in the Amsdell building. She was hired right out of the Buffalo Normal School in 1931 and remained teaching at the small school until 1936. Mrs. Kimmel was fond of describing her early experiences in the school and often stated that classes were never canceled due to inclement weather, although occasionally she and her pupils had to be taken home by horse and sleigh.

Like most one room schools of that period, the Amsdell building originally housed all eight grades. However, after centralization, the building was used for grades one through three. Edith Avery was the building Principal until the school was closed in 1958. The school then remained vacant for the next thirty years; but it continued to be used at various times as a polling place for School District and Town elections until about 1975.

In 1987, the Hamburg Town Board set up a creative agreement with the Frontier school system whereby the Town Board would lease the old school to the "Centennial Art Center". The Art Center was in need of a new home because they had lost their lease in the Chamber of Commerce Building in Hamburg, and although the old school had been closed for over thirty years, it was considered in good condition and certainly was a perfect fit for the Center.

The Centennial Art Center has occupied the building since the Spring of 1988. Since that time the tradition of classes, exhibits and workshops continue to interest an ever-growing number of people who participate in what the Center has to offer. The Art Center is governed by a Board of Directors and all the work is volunteer.

ATHOL SPRINGS No. 10



In 1886, the early Athol Springs community was also known as "Athol Mineral Springs" and was said to be located in West Hamburg, New York. During that period, the community was best known for the water from its famous medicinal spring that was touted as a positive cure for Dyspepsia, "Derangement's" of the stomach and liver, chronic rheumatism, and diseases of the kidney and bladder. But however potent the spring water, it was probably more the waters from Lake Erie that brought early residents to this lake side community.

The first Athol Springs School was a one room building on the northwest corner of Big Tree Road and St. Francis Drive. It is believed that this first school was constructed just before the turn of the century and served children in that general area. By the start of the second decade of the twentieth century, the growth of the area's population brought about the need for a new school.

The school, completed in 1920, was built on Camp Road at the site of the present building. This was considered closer to the center of the District's population since at that

time the school served children living in Locksley Park, Hoover Beach, part of Bay View and the area on Camp Road from Route 5 to Southwestern Blvd. (Locksley Park was originally the Franklin Locke Farm.)

When the school was first built, the building housed grades 1-8 and was believed to be large enough to handle student population for the next quarter century. As you look at the above photo, the original school is the lower section at the left side of the present building.

By 1930, those earlier projections on student population growth proved to be faulty and a first addition was made to the school to accommodate increased enrollment. In 1933-34, the school had to be expanded once again; this time as part of a WPA Project. The classroom addition was made at the west end of the original building and included a combination auditorium-gymnasium at the rear of the structure. This addition can be seen in the photo at the right of the original school.

In 1952, just after centralization, school principal, Hildegard Bagg was in charge of a school that provided facilities for children in kindergarten through the eighth grade, enrollment was about 210 students and there were ten faculty members. Special teachers were provided for music, art and physical education.

For the next thirty years, the school would serve the children of the Athol Springs community. However, after centralization, grades seven and eight were moved to the new High School and grades two through six were transferred to other schools in the District before eventually going to the Cloverbank school in 1959. When the Athol Springs school was closed in 1979, there were 143 students enrolled in several kindergarten and first grade classrooms.

After the closing, it was leased to a local resident who started a weight lifting and fitness center. When the Center closed, the building was moth balled briefly until sold to the Charles J. Sellers Insurance Company in 1982. Those who pass the building today at 4300 Camp Road certainly must be impressed with the job done on the old school by the new owners. It's obvious that they have taken great pains to retain its original charm and it shows in the beautifully kept facility. If it wasn't for the Insurance sign in front, you could almost hear the school bell ringing.

BIG TREE No. 7



The first school built in Big Tree was a one-room building, constructed about 1850 on Big Tree Road, just west of the old abandoned Hamburg Railway Trolley Line, just west of South Park Avenue. In 1870 when the Fairgrounds, Camp Road and Big Tree school districts merged into Big Tree District No. 7, this first building was moved up the hill to the corner of Bay View Road and South Park Avenue.

It was felt that the consolidation of the three school districts would lower the tax rate from around one dollar to forty-seven cents, and to the people of those days this represented a significant savings. However, the merging of the Districts did not make all of the early residents of this farm community happy; because the children now had to walk longer distances to school, and this of course took valuable time away from the child's work on the family farm. To solve the problem, some of the older boys would ride horseback to and from school, leaving their horses at neighboring farms during the school day.

In 1909, when a new two room school house was proposed for the site at Bay View and

South Park, the old one room school was auctioned off and then moved back down the hill to the southwest corner of Big Tree Road and South Park Avenue. The school was later converted to a residence and still stands on the corner today. Appropriately, the owners have painted it Red.

Since settling on the Bay View Road site in 1909, the school building has had numerous additions and renovations. In about 1920, the wooden structure was expanded to seven rooms and in 1928 the first brick addition was made to the rear of the building, bringing the room total to ten. In 1961 another brick addition was made to the rear of the building to house a combination gymnasium, recreation room, and cafeteria. This addition was constructed with money that had been left from the old Big Tree School district.

Most children who attended the Big Tree school, prior to 1952, and had completed the eighth grade went on the Blasdel High School to get their high school diploma. In the years following centralization, the school continued to house grades 1-8 and had a faculty of twelve teachers, one regular substitute and a school nurse. Veteran Big Tree Administrator Vera Schrader was the principal.

Mrs. Schrader came to Big Tree in 1928 as a teacher and two years later she was appointed principal. When she was named principal at the Woodlawn Intermediate School in 1956, Archie Miller was appointed to take her place at Big Tree; and when the school was closed in 1986, Carmelo Parisi was the principal. Mr. Parisi had also served as building principal at both Athol Springs and Wanakah schools.

By 1981, the school building was housing children in grades k-3, enrollment had dropped from about 250 to 160; and the old antiquated wooden structure was in need of expensive renovations. As a result, in 1986, the building was closed and then sold to the Shaw Law Firm. They renovated the wooden front of the old building and now have their offices there. The 1961 brick addition was converted to a Convenient Food Mart and just recently closed.

After the venerable old building was closed, the children were transferred to other schools in the district, most of them to Woodlawn. This, however, led to overcrowding until in 1993, the Big Tree children came "home" to a new Big Tree school built about a mile from the old one on the Frontier High School site.

BLASDELL HIGH SCHOOL No. 8



The first school building in Blasdell was constructed in about 1843 in the community's earliest settlement along the Milestrip Road. Most of the early families, settlers from New England, purchased land from the Holland Land Company on this road and built their homes on what during that period was the southern boundary of an area that later became the Village of Blasdell. The center of the community did not move north toward Lake Avenue until the mid 1880's.

The wooden one room school was built on the south side of Milestrip Road on land between what today is the former Erie Railroad Tracks and Jeffrey Blvd. The assessment for each property owner included 45 cents a year for the school tax, \$15.00 for building the school, and \$4.00 for the teachers' salary. The two teachers were Lena Bachman and Cora Reed who received a weekly salary of \$8.00. This school served the children of the Milestrip community as well as those living along the Turnpike (Woodlawn).

By 1890, attendance had increased to over sixty pupils and it became obvious that a

new and larger facility was needed. By this time the community's center of population had moved to the north and so it was decided to build the new school on Arthur Avenue. In 1894, a four room wooden school house was constructed that would then become Blasdel High School, and although the school faced Arthur Avenue, it was set back far enough that the rear was close to Madison Avenue.

Whether this was by design, is not really clear; however, as the enrollment increased and when it became necessary to add on to the school, the new addition was conveniently made to the front of the wooden building. This brick addition, built in 1911, had four rooms on the first floor along with three rooms, an office and a study hall on the second floor. Mr. William G. Miller was principal and it was he who presented the diplomas at the school's first graduation exercises in 1912. This building addition with the original arched window in front is still easily visible today on the Arthur Avenue side of the present building (Senior Residence).

Fourteen years later the district, faced with overcrowding once again, demolished the original old wooden structure and built the final brick addition along Madison Avenue. The first construction plan made no provision for a second floor over the new auditorium ; but a special meeting was held in June 1925 and the voters approved the change to make the new addition all two stories high.

This building remained the Blasdel High School until centralization, and even then it continued to serve children in all 12 grades until the Frontier High School was opened four years later. In 1951, Miss Ruth E. Pray replaced long time Blasdel principal Charles Buesch who was appointed Frontier District Co-Principal for Instruction, and in 1955, she became Pupil Personnel Accountant for the Frontier Schools. The highly respected and much revered Miss Pray had been in the Blasdel building for over fifty years as a student, teacher and principal. She retired in 1960 and passed away in 1979.

After the Frontier Complex was opened on Bay View Road, the Blasdel School remained open for grades 1-6. When the new elementary school on South Park Avenue was opened in 1959, it then housed all district seventh grades before the Amsdel Junior High was completed in 1965. From that time through 1993 when it was closed, it served as the Blasdel Elementary School Annex. It was later sold and today is home to the Lilly Housing Corporation's Senior residence.

After Centralization, the school board approved the use of money that was left from the former Blasdel School District's building fund to construct a new library for Village residents. The Library was built in 1954 directly across the street from the old school, on the southeast corner of Madison and Salisbury avenues. The heavily used facility is presently part of the Erie county Library system and appropriately enough, is used extensively by Blasdel elementary school youngsters.

LAKE VIEW No. 12



The Lake View School was built in 1890 on land conveyed to the district by Catherine Walden Meyer, daughter of prominent Buffalo attorney and former mayor of Buffalo, Ebenezer Walden. The Walden's owned most of the land that would ultimately become Lake View. And, as a matter of fact, the present Lake View Road was originally known as "Walden" Road and the community took its name, "Lake View" from the Walden home overlooking Lake Erie. Mr. Walden also built the former Lake View Hotel in 1880.

Since there is no documentation, it's not really clear whether Mrs. Meyer donated the land or sold it to what would become Hamburg's School District No. 12. It is known, however, that Lake View pioneer, Frank Trinder who later became a school trustee, convinced Mrs. Walden to make the land available for the construction of the four room all wooden school house. (Originally it had three classrooms and a library).

Lake View's first School Trustee was Nelson Broad and its first teacher was Julius Gressman. Apparently, early teachers moved around quite often because Gressman also had

been employed by both the Big Tree and Amsdell schools before coming to the new school in Lake View in 1891.

The school building was constructed almost in the middle of the early community, on the south side of Lake View Road, and just west of where Versailles Road intersects with Lake View Road. The building originally housed grades 1-8; but in the years after centralization, it was used for second and third grade overflows from both Pinehurst and Big Tree.

In its early history, the Lake View district shared a boundary on the north with the Shaleton School district, and as a result it was not uncommon for children from one district to cross over and attend school in the neighboring district. However, children attending the Lake View School generally lived as far west as the railroad tracks (actually about 25 yards west of the tracks), as far east as Heltz Road, as far south as North Creek Road, and as far north as the Center Street - Versailles Road intersection.

The school building's unique key-hole shaped window was a distinctive feature incorporated into the building by the architect to symbolize the "Key To Knowledge" which could be obtained by all those who came to study here. Of course, Mr. Gressman was there to provide the key.

In 1951-52, when the school became a part of the Frontier school system, there were five faculty members on the staff at the school. Donald Dix was principal and also was the seventh and eighth grade teacher. He later would become principal of the new Blasdel Elementary School when it was opened in 1959. William Crocoll then became principal at Lake View.

In 1976, due to declining enrollments and the cost of maintaining the aged building, the Frontier school district closed the school. It was sold in 1979 and later became the home of the Southtown's Christian Center until it was destroyed by fire in November 1996. It's interesting that when it was destroyed, the exterior of the building was essentially unchanged from the view in this photo. It's probably most appropriate that the site today is occupied by the Lake View "Children's World Day Care" facility. Incidentally, for those who may wonder, Lake View historian Duke Spittler tells me that the name "Lake View" is two words!

SHALETON No. 4



The present Shaleton School was constructed in 1921 and originally was home to Hamburg District No. 4. The district was bounded on the north by the Lake View School District and served children from the Pinehurst and Clifton Heights communities as well as those youngsters who lived North of the Center Street-Versailles Road intersection in Lake View.

When first built on Heltz Road, about a half mile south of Pleasant Avenue, the school was used for grades 1-8. When the school became a part of the Frontier system in 1951, it served children from kindergarten through the third grade. La Reta Jenney was the principal and there were five faculty members on the school staff. The school later served just third grades and from 1960 to 1969 it was used for Special Education classes.

The structure situated on one acre of land had four classrooms, a large recreation room and a bus garage. The district did store at least two buses at the site until the building was closed in 1969. It then remained vacant until 1976 when new owners converted the building to its present use as the "Discovery" Pre K School.

It's interesting that when built in 1921, the building was believed to be one of the most modern schools in the country. As a matter of fact, the same plans were used for school buildings constructed in other states across the country. The architects boasted of the plentiful window area providing great natural lighting, and for some reason it was felt that 16 ft. ceilings promoted a healthy environment.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the area referred to today as Shaleton, was more popularly called "Weirs Crossing". It is believed that the community got its name from an early resident. This was a community of about ten houses built along Heltz and Versailles Roads by the Acme Shale & Brick Company for its employees.

Most of these houses were built near and backed up to the Company Shale Pit. In fact, one of these houses, a red brick structure built north of the present building and closer to Pleasant Avenue, became the first "Shaleton School". (The reason for the name change should be obvious). Eventually, the school building's foundation was undermined and it collapsed into the Pit. Both Shaleton Schools were constructed with Acme Company bricks.

The first Shaleton school, although doomed by the shale pit, did serve the educational needs of the community before the present building was constructed. However, it is believed that this first school's only student to go on to graduate from high school was Lake View pioneer, George Heltz.

Heltz went on to graduate from Hamburg High School in about 1901 and his experiences should give some insight into the life of school age children in rural areas of the town prior to 1910. Each day he would get up very early to ride his farm horse, bareback, from Lake View to Hamburg, return in late afternoon to complete his farm chores and then well after dark, do his school work from the light of an oil lamp.

The former Brick Factory site today, on the north side of Pleasant Avenue near the railroad tracks is occupied by the Operating Engineers Local 17 Training Center. The Shale Pit can be seen directly across the road on the south side of Pleasant Avenue between Heltz and Versailles Roads. The Brick Factory was demolished in 1973.

WANAKAH No. 5



The Wanakah School served children from the three Lake Shore communities of Wanakah, Cloverbank and Mt. Vernon for over 150 years. "Wanakah", an indian word meaning "Beautiful Land By The Water" was the name given to the area by the three men who helped develop the community, John T. Roberts, Jewett Richmond and Charles Sherrill. Prior to 1900, most of the land from East Parkway to Pleasant Avenue, other than a strip of land that today is Columbia Avenue, was owned by Abner Stilwell whose wife Elmira attended the early Wanakah School.

The Cloverbank community was originally the Kilderhouse farm before it was sold to Buffalo businessman, William Morgan. Morgan later sold it to E. M. Sattler who divided the land into lots for new homes.

Most of Mt. Vernon was originally owned by a wealthy Buffalonian, Truman G. Avery. After his summer home was destroyed by fire, he sold the entire Mt. Vernon area to the Ricaby Development Company. They had plans to develop the community; but financial troubles during

the depression forced them to sell to various realtors who turned the area into a thickly populated neighborhood.

It's interesting that there are records indicating that Mr. Ricaby, to get people to come to Mt. Vernon to live in his development, built a one-room stucco private school house on Lake Shore Road in 1927. Unfortunately, after some research, the location of that school is still a mystery. However, the school did exist and was operated by the Ricaby Company during the 1927-28 school year. Syrena B. Totten was the teacher.

The first school in the vicinity of these three Lake Shore communities was a log cabin built about 1795 on the Lake Erie side of what was then a dirt road running through neighboring farm land. Some fifty years later, a little red schoolhouse took its place and was located in Cloverbank.

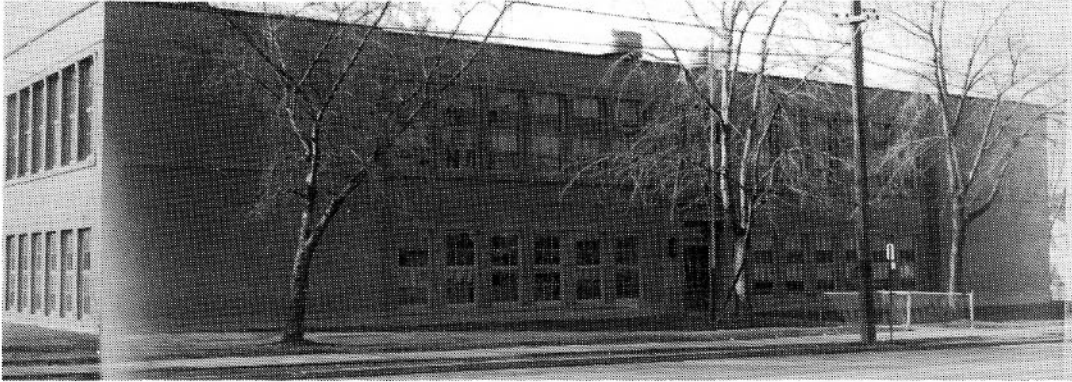
The initial school building constructed on the present Wanakah School site was a one-room building constructed about 1900. The builders of the school proudly boasted that it was equipped with a coal-fired furnace, certainly an innovation at that time. Children wishing advanced work were sent to Westfield.

In 1928, Mrs. Hazel (Morgan) Burley came to Wanakah as a teacher. One year after she arrived in Wanakah, the original part of the present brick building was constructed adding six rooms. A wing for an auditorium was built in 1935, and in 1941 a second floor was completed which added an additional ten rooms. Mrs. Burley was named principal of the school in 1937 and after centralization and 25 years of exemplary service, she retired from the new Cloverbank Elementary building in 1963.

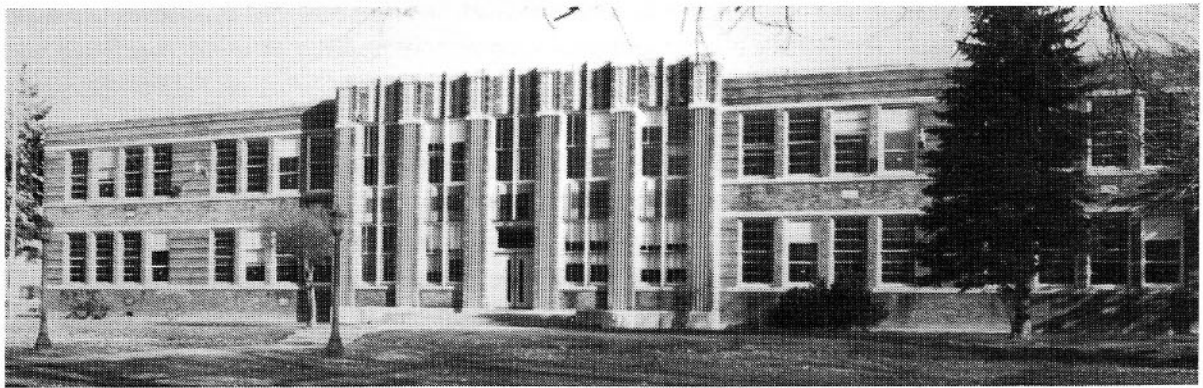
During the war years enrollment at the school was about 225; but by 1954, just two years after centralization, the school had 700 children enrolled. This made double sessions necessary and the use of the basement at nearby Wayside Church for some classes. When the Pinehurst School and the Frontier High School were completed in 1955, the 7th and 8th grades were sent to the High School and the fourth, fifth and sixth grades to Pinehurst. Five first grades and four second grades were then housed at Wanakah.

The Wanakah School continued to serve district youngsters in various elementary grades for another forty years until it was closed in 1993. Since that time it has received new life as the Frontier Education Center, home of the district's Administrative Offices.

WOODLAWN No. 13



Pictured above: Woodlawn Primary. Pictured below: Woodlawn High School.



By the middle of the 1880's, Blasdell residents wanting a more direct route to the Lake, constructed what today is known as Lake Avenue. When this early crude road was finally cut through and met the Turnpike, it created a crossroad and thus a foundation was laid for the Woodlawn community.

At that time, Woodlawn was divided into three farms. The property north of Lake Avenue and west of the Turnpike was the 30 acre Harris Farm, the land between the lake and the turnpike and directly south of Lake Avenue was owned by the Salisbury's and the land east of the turnpike was the Palmer Skinner Farm.

In 1891 the Woodlawn Beach & Cottage Company was established and purchased both the Harris and Salisbury Farms. In the years that followed, a rapid development took place including the construction of a dance hall, a warehouse and some other permanent structures. That was also the year that regular boat service was started between the city and Woodlawn.

The growth of the beach and amusement park facilities gained some notoriety for the area and now the Woodlawn community was definitely established. These developments along with the coming of some new industry were responsible for an influx of new permanent residents and the call for a community school.

On March 28, 1893, a meeting was held at the Titus Hotel to organize a school district for the community. Eighteen voters were present when Hamburg District No. 13 was organized as a common school. It is believed that the district's first schoolhouse was a one room, 30 by 40-foot wooden structure, constructed between third and fourth streets at a cost of \$1825.00.

By 1911, the growth of student enrollment led the voters of the district to purchase the present site on Lake Shore Road between Second and Third Streets to erect a new four-room brick building. In 1919, four additional rooms and a combination auditorium and gymnasium were added to the original structure. The principal of the new renovated building was Mr. Andrew Beam and at this time the structure housed all twelve grades. Mr. Beam later would become District Superintendent.

By the middle of the 1930's, it was obvious that the district had outgrown the building on Lake Shore Road. Temporary classroom space to accommodate student overflows had to be set up in a private home, in the fire hall, and at the Church of Christ on Fourth Street.

As a result of this continuing growth, the construction of a new Junior-Senior High School building on Milestrip Road was begun in December 1935, and fifteen months later, in February 1937, it would be completed. Superintendent Andrew Beam and Principal Vernon Heiman presided at the dedication of the school which was delayed until May 1937 because of the sudden death of school board president, John A. Nelson.

After the opening of the High School on Milestrip Road, the Lake Shore Road building was used for grades K-6. Mr. Francis Manley was its principal. Mr. Heiman remained principal at the High School until 1951 when he was appointed District Co-Principal for Administration at Frontier Central. Marion Creedon then became Woodlawn High School building principal and when the new Frontier building was opened, she was named Junior High School Principal.

As the Frontier district made more modern facilities available, the Woodlawn schools, then housing elementary grades only, were closed. The Lake Shore Road building was shuttered in 1981 and the Milestrip school in 1993. Both were later sold and are still in use by new owners.

REFERENCES

Most of the material used in this History was taken from the files of the Hamburg Historical Society on South Park Avenue and the Office of The Hamburg Town Historian at the Dunn House on Gowanda State Road, Hamburg. The following were particularly helpful:

- Blasdell Collection, Elma Titus
- Memories of early Blasdell Schools, Ruth Pray
- History of Wanakah Schools, Hazel Burley
- History of the Big Tree Community, Clifford O'Melia
- History of Woodlawn Schools, Vernon Heiman
- History of Lake View, Raymond Healy
- The Frontier Herald and The Erie County Independent, Microfilm 1949-1955
- The Story of Hamburg Central Schools, Historian Files

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