

Looking Back

A Brief History of the Hadley-Luzerne Central School District

Gathered, Compiled, and Edited by Carolyn Hart Towers¹



At the turn of the eighteenth century, the first school in Hadley was formed. The year was 1791. The earliest record for a school in the town of Luzerne was 1813. For many years, students from both communities attended the same school. However, in 1838 both villages decided to operate their own separate schools. At the same time, there were Common school districts in all the townships, now covered by the Central District. In 1841 there were eight districts in the town of Hadley. In the 1860 school statistics, Hadley had seven districts with 360 pupils, Luzerne had thirteen districts with 622 pupils, Stony Creek had seven districts with 350 pupils, and Day had eleven districts with 556 pupils.

In 1891 Hadley Village (which was District #5) voted to build a new school for the staggering sum of \$2,751.83. Apparently students from both villages attended this school. In 1898 the two districts (Hadley #5 and Luzerne #1) voted to form a Union Free School District. The need for a new building soon became apparent and in 1905 property was purchased on Main Street in Luzerne for this purpose. The building was completed in 1909 and in 1914 the name officially became "Hadley-Luzerne Union Free School". That building served the surrounding communities until it burned in 1954.

Early curricula was college entrance with subjects offered and required including algebra, geometry, English, history, two years of Latin, and two years of an additional language. (Was there a Board of Regents in Albany back then??) Modern technology appeared early in the new district when the Board of Education approved the installation of a telephone in the school in 1901. The annual cost was \$20. Free textbooks were approved for students in 1910.

By 1936 there were over one hundred students in High School, with four male teachers on staff. The Music Department fielded both a glee club and an orchestra. There was no gymnasium in the building so Taylor's Hall was rented for both girls' and boys' basketball teams. The Hall burned during the 1935-36 school year. The IP Company Commissary in Corinth was then rented for boys' basketball practices and games. High School was available to the residents of the Union Free School District. Students from the surrounding Common districts, if they went to high school, either made their own arrangements or their districts contracted other districts to provide "higher" education to their students. Residents of Stony Creek often attended Luzerne while some Day residents attended Corinth.

¹ Carolyn Hart Towers (Class of 1945), June 2000

The State Legislature enacted laws that made centralization attractive in 1925 and in 1937 voters approved the centralization and designation of CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.1 OF THE TOWNS OF HADLEY, DAY AND EDINBURG, SARATOGA COUNTY; LUZERNE, WARRENSBURG AND CALDWELL, WARREN COUNTY. A new educational day had dawned.²

At the time of the centralization there were approximately fourteen Common districts operating in the four towns. Luzerne had six; #2 (Gailey Hill), #3 (Call Street), #4 (East River Drive), #5 (Scofield), #7 (Ferguson Hollow), #8 (Pinewoods) plus the Union Free District. District #2 is now the School House Museum on the site of the old Union Free School (*Note: The District #2 building was moved again. It is now located at the corner of Main, Wall, and Mill Streets in Lake Luzerne. It is still the School House Museum. It was moved in the summer of 2004 - the webmaster*). District #7 covered the Northwoods/Lake Vanare area and #8 covered Towner Road area. Apparently Districts #6 (Buttermilk and Thomas Road) and #9 (Glens Falls Mountain Road) had consolidated with other districts prior to centralization. District #10 (Hartman Hill) had not centralized and students attended HLCS for many years until a vote was taken to affiliate with Corinth Central, which is still in effect.

Hadley was running four Common districts which included District #1 (Wolf Creek on Stony Creek Road), #3 (Parker in the Stewart Bridge area), #4 (Eddy Road on Hadley Hill), and #7 (Hadley Hill). District #5, the Hadley Village school, had already become part of the Union Free School.

Day, which contained eleven districts, had consolidated over the years. Two districts remained in 1938 when both were absorbed, one to Edinburg and the other to Hadley-Luzerne.³ The one at Conklingville remained open until 1959. At that time all the students were bussed to HLCS.

Stony Creek originally had ten districts, which over time were consolidated into three. None of these were part of the original centralization, but almost all of the high school age students attended high school and graduated from HLCS. A small number attended Warrensburg. In 1953, District #3 (Waite) was annexed to HLCS and in 1963 both the #7 (Knowlhurst) and #4 (Lanfear) districts joined HLCS.

Many of the common school districts were kept operational for children in Grades K-6 simply because there was "no room at the inn." The need for a new and expanded building was readily apparent. The first proposed site vote was held in May 1937 and was handily rejected. A series of proposals followed, all rejected. All was not harmonious among the voters of the two principal towns, Hadley and Luzerne. Rumors circulated that the Wayside property had been

² A History of Hadley-Luzerne Schools, Clayton H. Brown

³ "In Days Past" -p.28, Greenfield Press, 1995

purchased, plans drawn up, and steel ordered for construction to commence in the Fall of 1941. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7 quickly laid those plans/dreams to rest for the duration of the war. Whether those rumors were based upon fact or fallacy is questionable for Mr. Clayton Brown indicated in his book that the Wayside property was not purchased until May 1948. A bond issue was approved by voters in 1952 for the construction of an elementary school. In the interim classes were being held in various locations throughout Luzerne. The Odd Fellows Hall (currently the Lake Luzerne Town Hall parking lot) held grades K-3, while grades 4-6 were, at different times, over the Fire House (now the Post Office) and over the Luzerne Market.⁴

At the time of the fire at the Union Free School located on Main Street, the "new school" on the former Wayside property, already housed the K-6 students in a building not yet completed. The 340 students in grades 7-12 were without a "home." Moving day came sooner than expected and the Class of 1954 holds the distinction of being the first to graduate from the "new school." Additions came with startling regularity. A high school addition and auditorium, as well as a bus garage for the growing bus fleet, was built in 1958, a "sixth grade" addition onto the high school was completed in 1965, and a new campus to house middle schoolers (grades 5-8) was completed on Hyland Drive in 1973 and named after long-time administrator Stuart M. Townsend. With the help of community members a Robert Leather's Playground, named the Eagles' Nest, was built in the field by the auditorium in 1990. Although not necessarily an official "building project," the playground has been enjoyed by both students and teachers. In 1992 renovations to the Main School included a much larger Media Center (on the site of the former gymnasium), renovation of the cafeteria, and the addition of the George Doherty Gymnasium in the field beside the auditorium. Plans are under way for doubling the size of the SMT Middle School (to house grades 3-8), upgrading the outdated science labs, and various renovations at the Main School. Voters approved this \$13.8 million project in December 1999 with an anticipated completion date of 2002.

Most of the current alumni have lived through **some** of the major changes since centralization. Many attended "one room schools" at some point in their early education. It's interesting to see the educational expectations of students come almost full circle to the requirements listed in the early 1900s. The methods may be different but the desired outcome is the same -- a quality education for all students!

⁴ Material from HL Historical Society and Stony Creek Historical Association Journal, Vol III number 1