



Compared to today's high school graduating classes in the hundreds, the Fairport High School graduating class of 1897 totaled fifteen. At the time, Fairport High School, called the Fairport Union School, was located on West Church at the site of the current Fairport Central School District Office. Seated in the front row are Bessie Dobbin, John Ayrault, and Dora Covey. Seated behind them in the second row are Katherine Meehan, Lewis Sumeriski, Anna McAuliffe, William Rundell, and Birdie Cobb. Standing are Irving Kohler, Helen Roberts, Robert Tummonds, Mary DeLand, Walter Scott, May Watson, and Milton Kohler.

On February 26, 1870, the Fairport Union Free School District #9 was formed, land was subsequently purchased on West Church Street, and a building was erected at a cost of \$20,000. Opened in 1872, it was a "fine, commodious structure, built of brick" with six classrooms, a nurse's office and the principal's office on the first floor, and three rooms in the cellar. Four more rooms were added in 1888.

The new school, accredited as a high school and chartered by the Board of Regents in 1874, provided preparatory and academic departments serving grades one through twelve and afforded "superior facilities to pupils of all grades of advancement." Nearly all of the teachers had trained at state normal schools or were college graduates. Serving as role models for their students, teachers were to be in their classrooms 15 to 20 minutes before the beginning of class and "were expected to be watchful for the interests of the children under all conditions." In turn, scholars were expected to "comply with all requirements made by their Teachers for the good of the school." They had to be "diligent in study,

prompt in obedience, and ... *avoid all social intercourse whatever during study hours.*" The three-year course of study was extended to four years in 1895 to conform to the requirements for a Regents diploma. In 1897 a Training Class was added for the preparation of teachers. The first graduating class, with four members, Mollie Hill, Ella Lewis, Charles Watson, and Charles Waldron, graduated in 1876. Faculty and class size increased steadily, rising to graduating classes of between 20 and 30, with 17 faculty members, by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The course of study included, at the minimum, English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, and history.

Despite the rules and academic requirements, there were diversions. In 1917 the senior class presented a play and a Shakespeare pageant. A glee club was established. The Sigma Alpha society for young men encouraged "debates, impromptus, and parliamentary practice." Alpha Gamma Sigma for young women was designed to make their "attainments broader" and required successful completion of at least one year of high school for admission. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Athletic Association and the Gymnasium Association were managing a "vigorous foot ball team" and a baseball team. Team sports were considered important not only for the activity, but also for their "moral uplift." In order to play, a student had to maintain grade level work and pay a fee of fifty cents.

Between 1914 and 1923 the school district doubled in size, necessitating a new high school. The West Avenue High School was opened in 1924 and the West Church Street school was remodeled and used as a grade school. It served elementary students for 31 years, until the opening of Johanna Perrin School in 1955. Unfortunately, the building itself had been allowed to deteriorate and was razed in 1955.