

Fairport's Graduating Class of 1913

The Fairport Central School District currently serves a community of almost 47,000 residents. The 2013 senior class of Fairport High School includes about 525 students. In contrast, the senior class of one hundred years ago consisted of ten young men and eleven young ladies, 21 students in all. The class of 1913 completed their high school studies at a school first opened for students in 1872, where now stands the school district's administration building at 38 West Church Street. About half of the class of 1913 lived in the village, and most others came from farming families in town. A few students resided in East Rochester and Penfield.



Circa 1920 view of Fairport High School on West Church Street.

For most of the 21 graduates of 1913, continuing their education was a priority; all but four went on to attend a university or college. Two enrolled at Syracuse University, while three others attended Union College in Schenectady, a close distance to Albany. Several enrolled at the Brockport Normal School, in a one year program designed to prepare aspiring teachers for work in rural areas of the state, a category that included Perinton in the early 1900's.

As the Fairport High School class of 1913 completed their advanced studies and entered the workforce, about half found employment as school teachers. Several, including Hazel Warner, Emily Cole, Nellie Ryan, Caroline Hansen and Clayton Bridges, taught in the schools of Fairport and Perinton. Others worked in Rochester area businesses, such as Eastman Kodak, Stromberg Carlson, and the Todd Company. Donald Coon, who attended Union College for two years, found employment close to home, at the Sanitary Can factory on Parce Avenue.

When the United States entered World War I, three 1913 FHS alumni joined the ranks of America's military forces. Voight Archer enlisted in February of 1918, and served in the 307th Infantry. Drafted for military service were Clayton Bridges and Robert Clapp. All three survived what was referred to at the

time as “the war to end all wars.” Clayton Bridges returned home after his service in Europe and resumed his teaching career. Robert Clapp, who graduated from Union College with a degree in Electrical Engineering, worked for a brief time in Cuba, but eventually made his home in Ramsey, New Jersey, where he was employed by the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

Perhaps the furthest to stray from his hometown was Frank Hanse, a graduate of Union College, who made his way to Oklahoma, as the proprietor of a restaurant. A classmate of Frank’s, Mabel Chesbro, went east to Ridgefield Park, New Jersey, where she was a respected high school principal for many years.

In June of 1963, a lively group of old friends convened for dinner and storytelling at the Green Lantern Inn. Fifty years after their commencement exercises, they talked, laughed and probably shed a few tears. They would have liked to have visited their old school, but of course it was gone, the victim of a wrecking ball. Although the West Church Street School was just a memory, those attending the reunion had the opportunity to visit with one of their favorite childhood teachers while visiting the new high school on Hulbert Road that proudly displayed her name –Minerva Deland.

In the year 2063, many of this year’s Fairport High School graduating class will likely come together to reminisce and compare the notes of their lives. If history is any indication, they will hold their reunion at the Green Lantern Inn.

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian Published in the Fairport-ER Post, 06/20/2013