

## **Martha Brown School Celebrates Fifty Years**

Bill Poray, Perinton Historian

Plans are underway to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of Fairport's Martha Brown Middle School. The school, at 665 Ayrault Road, held opening day ceremonies on February 1, 1965. At the time, the building was referred to as a Junior High School, named for the long time teacher and principal of Fairport schools. Some might be surprised that this was not the first Martha Brown School in Fairport. When the new Minerva Deland High School on Hulbert Road opened in 1959, the former high school on West Avenue became the district's first Junior High. During graduation ceremonies for the class of 1960, Board of Education President Robert A. Dudley formally announced that the West Avenue building would be renamed to honor Martha A. Brown. This was reportedly a surprise to the namesake, for she was quoted as saying, "If I'd known about it, I wouldn't have allowed it."

Born in 1890 on the family farm in Livonia, Livingston County, Martha Ann Brown graduated from the Geneseo Normal School 1910, now the New York University of New York at Geneseo. After teaching for ten years in several districts, she came to Fairport in 1920. Brown was the teacher of thousands of Fairport students, until her retirement in 1957, a career which spanned 47 years.



Martha Brown Junior High school in 1965

Perinton was one of the most rapidly growing areas of Monroe County in the early 1960s, and as a result, additional school space was required. Architect Benedict Ade, who had previously designed Johanna Perrin, Minerva Deland, and Brooks Hill schools, was commissioned to draw plans for a new junior high school. A site was identified on 42.5 acres of land on Ayrault Road, and was purchased from Stanley J. Ellsworth for approximately \$43,000. On April 2, 1963, a special vote of taxpayers was held to

vote on expenditures related to the proposed Junior High School. With overwhelming support, almost two million dollars was allocated to the new school's construction.

The opening day ceremonies for the new Martha Brown Junior High School included the laying of a cornerstone, by none other than Martha Brown, accompanied by retired school board member Anne Hartigan. A box concealed within the stone included lists of current students and teachers, correspondence and newspaper articles related to the school's construction, as well as photographs. Despite subsequent construction and additions, the cornerstone is still visible. Although the doors first opened to students in 1965, the year 1963 is etched on the cornerstone, and indicates the date of the project's approval and initial construction. Martha Brown died at 76 years of age, less than one year after the opening of the school.

In recognition of the fiftieth anniversary, the public is invited to an open house at the school at 665 Ayrault Road, on Saturday, January 31, from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon.

*Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian*

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