

FAIRPORT UNION FREE SCHOOL

By 1870, as the student population increased, the need for a graded high school with more opportunities for advanced students became obvious. 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.

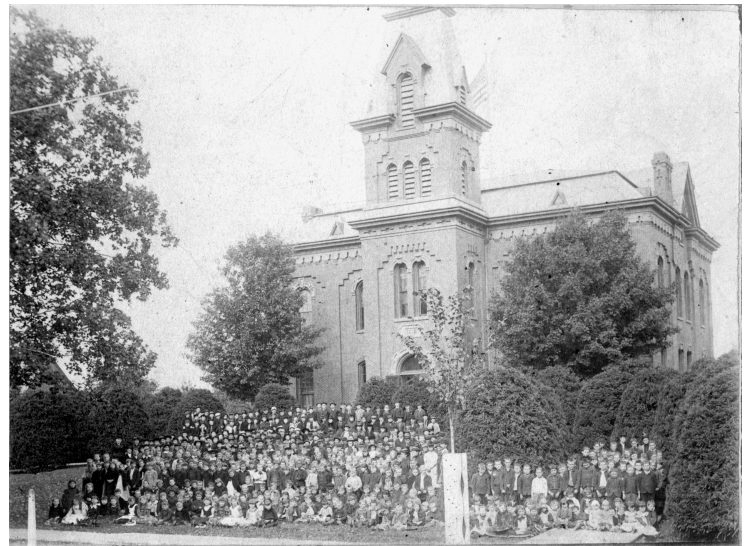
The new school, accredited as a high school and chartered by the Board of Regents in 1874, provided preparatory and academic departments serving grades one through twelve and afforded “superior facilities to pupils of all grades of advancement.” The academic department offered courses of study in English, the classics, and science, which prepared students for college. 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.

Nearly all of the teachers at the Union School had trained at state normal schools or were college graduates. Arthur C. Nute, high school principal in 1904, was a graduate of the University of Rochester, and Minerva DeLand, preceptress and classics teacher, was a graduate of Vassar College and Albany Normal College. 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 *will avoid all social intercourse whatever during study hours.*”

The first class was graduated from the Union School in 1876 and had four members: Mollie Hill, Ella Lewis, Charles Watson, and Charles Waldron. 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 20th century. The course of study included, at the minimum, English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, and history. In addition to a valedictorian and a salutatorian, by 1916, the Old English “F” was awarded to those who met the following requirements: 1. No illegal absence or tardiness. 2. A helpful effort and good conduct. 3. Good scholarship. 4. Representing the school in any interscholastic, debating or speaking contest. The best all around member of the class, as judged by the faculty, was to be awarded the Class Trophy Cup.

Despite the rules and academic requirements, there were diversions. In 1917 there was a senior class play, a glee club, and a Shakespeare pageant. 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 20th 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, reflecting the ballooning growth of the community. The overcrowded school had to send some elementary students to the Northside School and



hold half days sessions for others. The school trustees also had to purchase a house on West Avenue for additional classrooms.

When a new high school on West Avenue was opened in 1924, 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. Having lost its cupola in 1939 due to ice and rain damage, the rest of the building was razed in 1955. The school district's central offices now occupy the site.