

THE FAIRPORT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT IS CREATED

The first central school law was passed in New York State in 1914, and the first central school district formed in 1925. Centralization would make the more modern educational facilities and programs already enjoyed by children in more densely settled areas available to rural children, and engender more uniformity in the subjects taught. By the late 1940's most of the school districts in New York State had been centralized and it was becoming increasingly obvious that Fairport needed to join them. Area population had been steadily increasing, existing school buildings were inadequate and overcrowded, and funding was becoming a problem. Many rural students finished their local school program and went on to attend the junior and senior high schools in Fairport for which they paid no fees. In addition, there was no uniformity of instruction among the small, independent local schools who were also responsible for maintaining their facilities and hiring their teachers.

In November of 1949, representatives of nine of Perinton's eleven area schools agreed "to consider making a survey on centralization in the Fairport Area." (District #1 had joined with Pittsford and District #11 had affiliated with Victor and Macedon.) In May 1950 the Fairport Centralization Committee, with William Vick as chairman and Helen Martin as secretary, agreed to send representatives to Albany to meet with representatives from the State Department of Education about the feasibility of centralization. Before the end of that year, the decision was made to "approve the survey from the State Education Department as presented and . . . go on record as favoring a petition for centralization, and . . . we recommend the dissemination of information on this subject." Franklyn Hutchings, Lynn Holmes, Duane Hull, and Mrs. Parce Hannan were charged with the job of creating and distributing an informational booklet to the community.

The booklet described the process of centralization, beginning with the requirement that 60% of the voters in the outlying areas sign petitions requesting that the Commissioner of Education lay out a district for centralization. Only then would the process go forward and ultimately be presented to the voters for approval. The booklet also described the conditions in the Perinton-Fairport schools. The West Avenue School was overcrowded with students from outlying areas whose schools had closed. In some cases there were 40 students in a class. At Midvale school most teachers taught two grades together, and there were schools where a single teacher handled six or seven grades. Centralization promised smaller class sizes, full-time physical education, remedial reading, art, and music teachers, as well as one teacher per grade level at the elementary level. At the secondary level, there would be a wider choice of courses in the academic, commercial, and college entrance fields. More specialized training in homemaking and industrial arts would be available. The booklet also addressed issues of funding, state aid, building programs, and transportation.

The information was mailed in January of 1951, and petitions were circulated to an estimated 1,274 voters, of which 825 or 65% expressed their approval to proceed with a plan for centralization. The Committee decided to approach local organizations like the PTA, Rotary, Lions, and the Grange, asking them to include speakers on centralization in their programs. The committee also agreed to run a series of question/answer columns in the Fairport *Herald-Mail*. Although many residents had fears about the new system, centralization passed on April 30, 1951, by a vote of 653 to 450 out of 3,600



Members of the first Fairport Central School Board of Education. Seated: E. Duane Hull, J. Gordon Ross, Robert A. Dudley, Ann B. Hartigan; standing: Donald F. White, Lester Forman Superintendent Frank Brokaw, William Vick, Lynn C. Holmes.

eligible voters. Robert Dudley, Donald White, J. Gordon Ross, E. Duane Hull, Anne Hartigan, Lynn Holmes, and William Vick were elected to the school board. Frank A. Brokaw, who had been hired in February to replace the retiring Thomas Coffee, served as superintendent of the new Fairport Central School District.