

# High School Fields in Putnam County

Years ago, the fields were simply made. The grass was removed for a "skin infield", a fenced backstop was installed and two benches for the players were put down. Rainouts were common since the fields did not drain properly. Tractors pulled a drag over the field to prepare it for a game. Today brooms are hand pulled to smooth the field.

The baseball fields of today are one of the reasons why so many games can be played in such a short time even after torrential rains and the freezing and thawing of early spring that baseball teams of Northwestern Ohio have to deal with. Grass infields, brick dust, improved drainage systems, drying agents, enclosed fields, dugouts and watering systems have greatly improved the fields of Putnam County.

Columbus Grove has a beautiful field where sectional tournament play was held for many years. It has been at its current site since the early 1960s. It became one of the finest fields in the area when Tom Weber Jr. started coaching in 1986. It was also one of the first enclosed fields. A unique feature of the field was the left field corner which was shortened to allow the track's pole vault pit enough room. It was only 250 feet directly down the line and then it moved quickly to normal dimensions.

Continental's old field was directly east of the new one and was used for over forty years. In 2002, Continental built a new field when their school was renovated. The field is typical of all the new fields, grassed, enclosed and dugouts.

Fort Jennings first field was at the school. It was a typical field for that era, an open field, a backstop and only benches for the players. In the mid 1970's, the high school field was moved to the park where it is now. It is enclosed with dugouts and a skin field. A new field is on the drawing board and will hopefully be built near the high school in the near future.

Kalida has one of the oldest fields in Putnam County. It was built and dedicated in 1949. Over 5,000 people including the Governor came to the dedication. New dugouts and a fencing were installed several years ago. It had a skin infield and is lighted. The huge grandstand behind the home plate area was unique to high school fields. In 2023 the site was renovated. It now has a turf infield. The old grandstand was torn down and completely replaced. It now is one of the premiere facilities in the area.

Leipsic played its first game at its new field in 2010. It is located within the Charlie Bennett Park near the high school. Leipsic's previous field was at the high school where they played from 1964-2009. Before that, Leipsic played at the St. Mary's softball field and at Tempco field previous to that. The Vikings beautiful facility has all the amenities. It has a watering system, grass infield; it's enclosed with spacious dugouts and ample seating.

Miller City's first baseball field was just south of the Sportsman's Club along State Route 108. In the early 1950s, the next field was built just east of the current school. It was a skin field with only a back stop. In 1976, a new field was built over the existing site. It was a skin field with enclosed dugouts and fencing. It was modeled after the Fort Jennings field. In 2000, all the grass was replaced and a grass infield put in place. A watering system was installed in 2003. A new scoreboard and dugouts were erected in 2017.

Ottawa-Glandorf has played at the Sylvania Park, Glandorf High School and Memorial Field near the swimming pool. A new field was built near Glandorf in 2002. It is the largest field in Putnam County with a grass field, enclosed fencing, block dugouts and an underground watering system.

Ottoville has played at several fields over the years. The field at the park was unique in the spring with the river and geese in right field, the track teams in center, the light poles 250 feet from home plate and the backstop 15 feet from the catcher. Since there was little foul area in the home plate area, the fans, umpires and players were in close proximity. The field went to a stone field in the 1990's and added dugouts in the early 2000's but it remained an open field. A new field was built in 2008 at the new school. This facility is similar to all the new fields. I'm sure all the former Big Green players appreciate an outfield without a track, light poles and a river running through it!

Pandora-Gilboa's first field on the school site was located between the football field and the current field's left field. It was an open field with some fencing and benches for the team. The fencing for the football field in left field made for a unique ground rule. Directly down the left field line, the foul pole on the fence was less than 200 feet. It was treated one of two ways. Sometimes it was a home run and sometimes it was a ground rule double. The next field was moved to the old field's right field. The football fencing was still a homerun, but it was nearly 500 feet away. This field was grassed, partially enclosed and had spacious dugouts. Its grass field was unique in that the Pony League could play on it also since the grassed area was slightly smaller than normal. When Pandora-Gilboa built a new school, another baseball field was also added and it was ready for the 2008 season.

Thus, since 2002, five baseball facilities have been built at new sites, Continental, Leipsic, Ottawa-Glandorf, Ottoville and Pandora-Gilboa. The other four older facilities, Columbus Grove, Fort Jennings, Kalida and Miller City, have also kept up to date by improving their fields with new dugouts, watering systems, grass infields, seating etc. The former players of Putnam County are certainly jealous of the fantastic fields of today.