

All Schools Have Grown Greatly in the Past Decade, the 1950's

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A person familiar with the schools in Putnam County in 1950 and then gone from here since that time would be completely lost should he return now. Almost every school in the county has undergone a remarkable change during the past decade.

Many of the old school building have been torn down and replaced. Others have either had large new additions or been remodeled. In some cases the old buildings are still in use but new buildings have been erected nearly by to supplement the facilities.

Three school districts have passed out of existence since 1950 and three others almost lost their charters during that time.

Gone are the Blanchard, Belmore and Cloverdale districts. The Blanchard district, which included grade and high schools, was ordered closed by the state board of education in April, 1951, because of its small size. It was asked to merge with the Pandora, Ottawa or Leipsic districts.

Residents of the district, in a special meeting in May of that year, voted to merge with the Pandora district and the Pandora-Gilboa district came into being that summer and with the new school year of 1951-1952.

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THE GRADE school districts at Belmore and Cloverdale operated until 1958. Early that year there was talk of discontinuing those districts and the issue at Belmore was settled in March when the school building was completely destroyed by fire.

The county board of education in May decided to close those two districts and this action was approved that summer. The Cloverdale district transferred to the Ottoville and Continental districts and the Belmore district to the Leipsic and Deshler districts.

Ottawa and Glandorf districts were in danger of losing their charters in 1951 at the same time that the Blanchard district was closed. However, improvements in the curriculum and facilities brought about renewal of those charters in August. Bother districts received their permanent charters in May, 1952.

The Glandorf School was in a new modern building in 1950. That was one of the first post-war projects in this county and it included a new high school building, cafeteria and gymnasium. It is still considered one of the architecture masterpieces in the county. An addition to that building was constructed in 1958.

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ONE OF THE big factors leading to the jeopardy of the Ottawa charter was the condition of the district's two dilapidated school buildings. When a bond issue for a new building was voted upon in May, 1952, the permanent charter arrived in a matter of days.

The contract for the new two-story building was let in November, 1952, and the Ottawa pupils moved in on April 1, 1954.

Two weeks after the bond issue for that school was passed, plans were announced for another new school building in Ottawa. That was the Sts. Peter and Paul high school building. A fund-raising campaign was started immediately. Two days after the new public school was opened the contract for the parochial school building was let. The building was opened with the 1955 school year.

Miller City started plans for a new school and gymnasium in 1950. That was the year that the school's basketball team won the state tournament. When the issue came up for a vote that fall there was only one dissenting vote cast against it. However, there was technical flaw in the wording of the ballot and it had to be voted on again the next spring. This time it passed without a single vote of opposition.

THE MILLER CITY district passed another bond issue for an addition in November, 1959, and that project is to be undertaken later this year.

The Ottoville, Kalida, and Leipsic districts conducted two building projects. Kalida St. Michael's parish erected a grade school in 1950 and this was taken over by the public school district in 1958. The high school there was torn down and replaced in 1956 and 1957.

Ottoville passed a bond issue for a new school in 1950, and in 1955 they voted another \$90,000 for improvements

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which included a new gymnasium. That job was completed by the following November.

Leipsic approved a bond issue for an entirely new plant in 1952 and that new building, which included other grade and high schools, was dedicated in September, 1954. A large addition to that building was completed in 1959 and was just opened in recent weeks.

Another big school improvement program at Leipsic was at St. Mary's parochial grade school. Four classrooms were installed on the second floor of the school in 1954 and 1955, and under construction at the present time is a two-story addition which includes four more class rooms and an auditorium.

PROBABLY THE largest single project was undertaken at Columbus Grove where a new high school addition, including a large industrial arts and vo-ag shop and a gymnasium were erected. This was approved by the voters in 1955 and the following September contracts for the job totaling \$743,716 were awarded. The school was opened in 1958.

At the same time an entirely new plant was being erected at Pandora and the same district was making an addition to the Gilboa building. At Pandora the old building was torn down and the new one built on the same site. The new high school building was dedicated September 1, 1957.

Continental voters approved a bond issue for a large addition to their school in November of that year.

In 1959 plans were announced for a new grade school building to be constructed by St. Joseph's Catholic parish at Fort Jennings. Contracts totaling \$353,167 were let for that job in November.

ALSO STARTED last year was a new building for the Putnam County Retarded Children's School. That work began on June 23, 1959, northeast of Ottawa about five miles and it is now nearing completion.

The Vaughnsville district, although, not conducting any major construction projects, remodeled its facilities during the past decade. Being the smallest school in the county, it was one of those in danger of losing its charter for some time. For a while there was talk of combining the

Vaughnsville district with several small districts in Allen County, but the combined size of the proposed merger at that time was not enough to satisfy the state board of education and obtain its approval.

Expanding population has caused the need for the increased size of the school, although most were planned for the larger influx of pupils for a number of years, to come, many are already becoming crowded and the expansion programs are expected to be periodical necessities in all school districts.

In 1960 the following twelve high schools participated in the Putnam County League: Columbus Grove, Continental, Fort Jennings, Glandorf, Kalida, Leipsic, Miller City, Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS, Ottoville, Pandora-Gilboa and Vaughnsville.

This would change very quickly in the 1960's. In 1962, the Ottawa Public Indians and the Ottawa Sts. Peter and Paul Saints joined for three years to become the Ottawa Lancers. In 1965, the Ottawa Lancers consolidated with the Glandorf Dragons to form the Ottawa-Glandorf Titans.

In 1963, the Vaughnsville Vikings closed their high school and joined with Columbus Grove in.

Another change was the tremendous amounts of construction due to the millions of dollars made available to the schools by the state of Ohio. The schools of Putnam County had two choices, build a new school or renovate.

Columbus Grove, Fort Jennings, Kalida, Leipsic, Miller City, Ottoville and Pandora-Gilboa built new schools; Continental renovated. Ottawa-Glandorf built new elementary schools in Ottawa and Glandorf and renovated the high school.