

Over One Hundred Years of Graduates

The concept of township high school for the residents of the area surrounding Gilmanton began in 1910. Ray Loomis, Gilmanton resident likened to the idea and quickly became a supporter of the idea, which was presented to electors. The question, "Shall Gilmanton have a high school?" was answered "yes" by the majority and thus, the legacy of GHS came into being.

Classes began in the fall of 1911 in classroom space that was rented from the District 1 Gilmanton Grade School, with twenty-five students enrolled. The first graduating class from Gilmanton High School was on May 31, 1912, when two students – LaVerne Forest and Fred Litchfield received their diplomas.

GHS quickly outgrew the space in the three classrooms and in the 1919-20 school year; then Principal Landry began his campaign for a new building.

The vote in June of 1920 to purchase a site and build a new high school was passed. An injunction was filed in opposition. A second vote on September 15, 1920, to not rescind the vote to build was passed. Work on the new building began in April, 1921.

On September 19, 1921, the Gilmanton High School opened the doors to its grand new building. The three-story brick structure contained a small gymnasium in the basement level, with a small balcony overlooking the basketball court. For those too young to remember, this unique design has only been seen on a handful of known pictures of the gym.

In 1937, the first high school yearbook was published. The Wanderjahr was 35 pages long, with photographs glued in by hand and each page individually typed. Two years passed before another yearbook was published and in 1940, the more familiar name of "Echoes" was adopted.

Victor R. Carlson, one of Gilmanton's longest running Principals began in 1939. Until his retirement in 1971, Mr. Carlson held many positions at GHS to include teacher, counselor, coach, principal and administrator. His love for the students and community of Gilmanton spanned his entire life and he kept in contact with various persons in the area until his passing in August of 1994.

Quickly outgrowing the three-story building, in 1951 work was begun on the gymnasium and agriculture classroom/shop addition. This drastically changed the face of GHS and also allowed for the updating of the home economics classroom and school lunchroom. Work was completed in 1952 with the help of donated labor by community members and also labor from the students enrolled in the shop classes at GHS.

In 1953, area one-room schools were consolidated to make the school district larger. This eventually prompted the school to remodel the third floor assembly room into classes to house the seventh and eighth grades. A music room was built in 1963, again with donated community labor.

The largest class ever, to graduate from GHS was in 1964, where 37 students received their diplomas. A 50 year reunion was held in 1962, of which six hundred community members and alumni attended.

An office addition and hallway to house over 200 lockers was finished in May of 1970. This addition connected with the already existing music room, gymnasium and the original three-story building. Steel bleachers replaced the wooden, hand built ones in the gym. A new entry to the gym opened its doors in 1978, creating additional space for concessions.

The 1980s brought several internal and external facelifts at GHS. A new furnace and fuel tanks, plus tuck-pointing the original brick building were changes made that were necessary for the 65 year old building. New, energy efficient windows were installed in the building. The cafeteria was updated with modern commercial appliances for cooking and dishwashing. A new ceiling was installed in the gymnasium, as well as updated lighting. Student lockers were replaced in the main hallway. Remodeling was done to the office areas as well. Ceilings were lowered in the classrooms and new flooring and paint was applied where needed.

Email and internet, coming in on one 56k line arrived at GHS in the 1990s. In 1993 there was a science room and greenhouse addition. Once again, the community came together to donate much of the labor for the project. A new concession stand was built in the gym lobby and the weight room was updated. Distance learning entered the curriculum with the installation of a state of the art ITV classroom, allowing the students to attend virtual field trips or take foreign language classes or university courses from GHS. In 1995, a computer network infrastructure was born, the cabling winding throughout the school.

After an exciting basketball season in 2001, the Gilmanton girls' team represented their hometown in Madison at the WIAA state basketball tournament. The girls brought home the gold, along with the WIAA sportsmanship trophy.

With its long-standing progressive nature, GHS entered the 21st century with more enhancements to technology. In 2003, forty-two new computers were added to the building, creating a lab in the library and adding considerably to the existing computer labs located in the technology and business ed departments. Modern projectors were installed in the classrooms as well.

Nearing the end of this decade, there is ongoing commitment to Gilmanton moving forward in technology with the addition of mobile computing, wireless internet and a major network infrastructure overhaul to allow for web-based applications and increased device use.

While student numbers are declining, student achievements in and out of the classroom remain a common denominator over the past one hundred years. Gilmanton graduates continue to move on to pursue their goals and achieve success.

Benjamin Franklin stated over 200 years ago, something that is still true today. "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." Gilmanton School District has a monumental investment in its students and staff, and continues to provide a great education to all who pass through the doors.