

Gilmanton School District History

Education is an important aspect in the lives of children. For many young people, this aspect of their life has been fulfilled by the Gilmanton School District. The Gilmanton School District is comprised of students from Alma, Chimney Rock, Dover, Gilmanton, Lincoln, Modena, Mondovi, Montana, and Naples townships. The majority of students reside in Gilmanton and Dover townships. In 2002, the Gilmanton School District was housed in three buildings: Dover Elementary (PK-2nd grade), Gilmanton Elementary (grades 3-6), and the Gilmanton Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12).

Today a great number of school activities and functions take place at the high school. While the high school may be the hub of the school district, the high school was not the first formal education for students in the area. Elementary one-room schools located throughout the townships educated area young people.

Elementary schools were found in the Town of Gilmanton as early as 1858. The Gilmanton School District #1, Gilman Valley School, Griffin School, and Oak Grove School were located in the Town of Gilmanton. The earliest Gilmanton Public School was moved and now houses the Gilmanton Town Hall. A two-story brick building built in 1909-1910 was destroyed by fire in 1952. The present Gilmanton Elementary building opened for classes on September 7, 1953. The Gilman Valley, Griffin, and Oak Grove schools closed in 1967 and consolidated into the Gilmanton State Graded School.

Tell School, located in the Town of Alma, closed in the spring of 1962 bringing additional students to the Gilmanton School District.

The Bennett Valley or Meadowbrook School, West Bennett Valley School, Three Mile Creek School, Rindahl School, Davis Valley School, and Lookout School were located in the Town of Dover. The Bennett Valley School was operating as early as 1860 and the West Bennett Valley School was in existence in 1871. On February 20, 1953 it was voted to consolidate the

one-room schools in to the Dover Graded School. Construction of the Dover Elementary began in June 1953. The school opened for classes in September, and was completely finished by November 1953. *Note: Dover Elementary was closed in 2009 and those grades were moved to the Gilmanton Elementary building. Shortly thereafter, grades 5 and 6 were moved to the junior/senior high and it became known as the Gilmanton Middle/High School.*

Seeing the importance of education, the officers of public instruction in Madison suggested to Mr. Houser of Mondovi that the township of Gilmanton would be an ideal location for a high school. Mr. Ray Loomis agreed and after petitioning the town board and a special election, the Gilmanton High School went from dream to reality in 1911. The Gilmanton High School would rent one large and two small rooms, located on the second floor, in the Gilmanton School District #1 building. A special election held in September 1920 finalized the plan to buy a site and build a new high school. The Class of 1921 would be the last high school class to graduate from the Gilmanton School District #1 building. The Class of 1922 would hold the honor of the first senior class to graduate from Gilmanton High School, and the Class of 1925 would be the first freshman class to complete all four years of their high school education in the new building. The main building of the high school still stands today and additions have been added to accommodate the growing needs of education. A gymnasium addition was added in 1952, much of it constructed by donated labor and the Agriculture classes, saving the district approximately \$40,000. Other additions include a band room, agriculture and shop area, main hallway, district office, boys' shower room, science room and greenhouse.

The leadership of the Gilmanton School District has been led by many capable principals/superintendents. The following people have guided the Gilmanton education process since 1912: A.S. Wells, Earl Robinson, Carl Robinson, Cora Breitling, Wallace Landry, H.J. Stillman, C.W. Wolcote, David Hulburt, Carl Hulburt, G.W. Crane, Al Moldenhour, Victor Carlson, George Henderson, Ben Ahrendt, Vernon Peterson, Ed Seivers, William Mihalyi, Terry Olson, Glen Denk, Clark Sheerar, Pete Klas, Michael Beighley, and William Perry. Mr. Carlson

served the Gilmanton School District for 32 years as a teacher, coach, counselor, principal and administrator.

The Gilmanton High School has a long-standing record of excellence. Gilmanton students have competed in state forensic, music, basketball, and track events. Future Business Leaders of America, Future Farmers of America, and Family and Consumer Education Members have held state offices and competed in national competitions.

Gilmanton School District graduates have entered all walks of life and have successful careers in health care, business, education, law enforcement, transportation, social work and aviation. They have answered the call of duty and bravely defended the United States in the armed forces. Many were welcomed home as heroes; some brought home with tears.

The Gilmanton School District, its students/graduates, faculty, school board, and community members have accomplished many goals since their beginning. The most visible accomplishment is the winning of the 2001 Division IV WIAA Girls State Basketball Tournament; the most obvious is the success of its students after leaving the Gilmanton School District.

Written by Le Anne Loesel in 2002 for the Buffalo County Historical Society. Reprinted with permission. Updated in 2017.