

# A HISTORY OF THE MASSILLON CITY SCHOOLS

## EDITED FROM THE WORK OF WILBUR ARNOLD '48

The Union School of Massillon was built without the benefit of experience, but was considered by people throughout the country to be the most complete structure erected in Ohio for graded school purposes. "Graded" meant the separation of students according to age and grade, instead of all pupils gathering in one room for instruction. The Union School contained, in 1848, primary, grammar, and high school departments.

For six years Union School was the only school house in Massillon. Because of the crowded conditions of the primary department in the Union School, in 1854, at the annual school election, the Board of Education was authorized to purchase a lot and erect a suitable building for an additional primary school. A lot was bought in that year on the northeast corner of the present Tremont Avenue and Third Street S.E. In 1855, a primary school building was erected at the cost of \$3,300. It was a brick building, 53 feet long, 33 feet wide, one story in height, with a basement and a tower. It was frequently referred to as a "model in style and arrangement."

In 1877, the Union School was found to be entirely inadequate to meet the needs of the community — so rapidly was the town growing. On April 24, 1877, the Board of Education decided to build a new school. The building, known as the North Street School, contained twelve rooms and had a large hall on the third floor. It was first occupied in September, 1879, and was dedicated a little later the same year. North Street School was built behind Union School, and, after its construction, the Union School was torn down, leaving a large front yard for the students to enjoy.

In October, 1881, a lot was purchased on the north side of Cherry Street N.W. between the present First Street N.W. and Second Street N.W., and soon thereafter the contract was let for a Cherry Street building. This was a small, two-room frame structure, housing the elementary grades.

The West Main Street Elementary School and the Richville Avenue Elementary School were completed in 1884. These were predecessors,



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*First Massillon High School 1879-1913*

respectively, of the next generation Harvey and Franklin Schools. The early buildings were frame structures and had four rooms; each school planned to accommodate about 110 pupils. They were built for the convenience of the younger primary children in the south and west parts of the city.

In 1901, the Oak Park School was built in the center of a lot located on the northwest corner of the present Walnut Road S.W. and 7th Street S.W. This was an elementary school. It contained eight well-equipped rooms with modern conveniences. The school was re-named Emerson School on April 25, 1913, when the Building Committee of the Board of Education decided to name the public schools after noted authors, educators, and statesmen.

In 1901, a new building was erected to replace Richville Avenue School; it occupied approximately the same location as the former school. It was planned so that its east side would face East Street (the present Third Street S.E.) and its west side

would face Fay Street S.E. This school was named Franklin Elementary School and contained eight rooms.

West Brookfield Elementary School was constructed in 1905. It was located in what is now the western part of Massillon on the Lincoln Highway (the Lincoln Highway was named in 1915). At that time it was a special district and was identified as an exempted village school. This school became a member of the Massillon public school system on August 15, 1915. West Brookfield was incorporated as a part of the city of Massillon in 1926. In 1934 the school was remodeled; it contained four rooms, three of which were used for classes.

Vinedale School was built in 1905 and became a part of the Massillon public school system on April 10, 1929, when the section in which it was located was annexed to the city of Massillon. It was a two-room cement block building situated on the east side of present 23rd Street S.E. When it was taken into the Massillon system, it was re-named the Lewis E. York Elementary School in honor of a former superintendent of Massillon schools.

In April, 1909, the Massillon Board of Education authorized the purchase of the Massillon Athletic Club, located on the present North Street N.E., between First and Second Streets S.E. This was to be used for athletic purposes and the physical education training of the students of the public schools. The gymnasium was in use until 1916 when the board resolved to sell the building.

In 1910 a new elementary building was erected on West Main Street to replace the one built in 1884. This was named Harvey Elementary School in memory of Thomas W. Harvey, one of Massillon's early school superintendents. The building contained twelve classrooms, four of which were added in 1939.

In 1913, because of the congested conditions existing in North Street School, the Massillon Board of Education authorized the construction of a new high school at the southeast corner of the present Oak Avenue S.E. and First Street S.E. — the approximate geographical center of the city of Massillon. This building was erected to accommodate 800 students. After later additions in 1923, 1936, and 1939, it housed approximately 1,500 students of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. It contained 54 rooms, two gymnasiums, and

an auditorium. The building was given the name of Washington High School by the Building Committee of the Board of Education on April 25, 1913.

High school football in Massillon received its impetus from the nationally known Tiger professional team of Massillon. The present high school team bears the name "Tigers" from that early professional organization. In the early 1900s the high school began supporting its teams and encouraging student participation. The school team of 1909 claimed the championship of northwestern Ohio, winning all its games but one — a tie with Akron Central High School. The team was one of the first self-supporting Massillon High School football teams, and even turned some money into the school treasury!

In the *Snail*, the yearbook of 1908, the following paragraph appears: "If Massillon High pursues the same policy in the future that she has this year, the coming years will see some triumphs in athletics. Nothing will influence a student to take an interest in school work more effectively than athletics."

In 1916 Massillon High School was first admitted to the High School Athletic Association. The yearbook for that year states: "We hereby take this means of expressing to the townspeople the school's appreciation of the loyal support rendered at all times. Not a game was played to which a great number of Massillon boosters did not 'turn out,' and at many of the out-of-town games they outnumbered the local rooters.

"We trust that in the future the M.H.S. teams may be imbued with the same fighting spirit and that same love of fair play that always characterized their work in the past."

In 1920 Edmund A. Jones Junior High School was erected in southeast Massillon at the corner of Pearl Avenue and Glenwood Street. There were 14 classrooms and a combination gymnasium/auditorium in the building. At first, the school was intended for elementary grades only, but in 1927 grades seven and eight were included; and in 1935 an addition was built in order to add the ninth grade. The school was named for Edmund A. Jones, a former Massillon school superintendent.

Also, in 1920, Horace Mann Elementary School was constructed to replace old Cherry Street

School. The building was located on the same site as the 1881 Cherry Street School. There were eight classrooms. This school was named after the noted American scholar Horace Mann.

The need for junior high school brought about the construction of Lorin Andrews and Longfellow Schools in 1923. Lorin Andrews is located at 661 Tremont Avenue S.W.; it accommodated nine grades, six elementary and three junior high school. It was named after the first superintendent of Massillon Union School.

Longfellow Junior High is located on the site of Massillon's first Union School and North Street School. It is the fourth school on that property and was named in honor of the famous American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It had thirty classrooms, music room, art room, library, gymnasium, and auditorium. There were additions to the building in 1939.

In 1924, recognizing the need for an athletic field, the school board authorized development of a site for athletic purposes...The field was located in the southeast part of Massillon, bounded on the north by Shriver Avenue S.E.; on the east by Third Street S.E.; on the west by Glenwood Street S.E.; and on the south by several lots. This Massillon Athletic Field was rushed to completion in the fall of 1924 in time for the football game with Canton

McKinley High School. The field was used until the new Tiger Stadium was built in 1939.

In 1927, Obie was christened mascot of Massillon. Washington High School became known as the "Tigers." Each class stopped picking its own class colors because orange and black were chosen for the school colors; class mottos also stopped. School spirit was high as ever. Rallies were a favorite thing to look forward to for the students. Students had many things to do and participate in during their high school years. Chapel was an activity students participated in every day.

In the '30s Depression years the focus of community pride became high school football. History of the game prominently identifies the Massillon Tigers and Canton Bulldogs as early hotbeds of spectator enthusiasm. The coals were fanned by Paul Brown, who returned from college to his beloved hometown in 1932 as high school football coach. Thereafter he promoted Massillon to national prominence.

But success didn't come easy. The Tigers' record in 1932 was five wins, four losses (including Canton) and a tie. In 1933 there were eight wins but included in the two losses was a 21-0 lacing by the Canton Bulldogs. Some grumbling was heard.

Paul recognized that as a communication problem and he suggested a club be formed where he could talk to interested fans about his approach to the game. The Massillon Tiger (Football) Booster



*Washington High School 1912-1992*

Club was formed in 1934. The dues were 50 cents (or whatever you could afford) and membership was open to everyone. On Monday nights during the season the membership came to hear the coach talk about football and there was time set aside for questions and answers. It was an approach suited to Paul's style. He not only calmed the existing fans but stimulated them to win others for the program.

Eventually the enrollment grew to more than 2,000 of the 30,000 population. All elements of the community united to make Massillon number one in high school football. Though money was scarce in the early days, supporters cheerfully donated their labor to see that the team had what it needed. And it probably was the lack of money that made the Massillon booster club the model that many have tried and failed to emulate. The key was that all walks of life labored together and created things that were otherwise unaffordable — top notch practice field, new stands, comfortable locker rooms, caring personal support. They had a stake in the outcome, and the sense of community and cooperation was inspiring. Massillon had recaptured true community spirit as the '30s came to an end.

Paul Brown left for the college ranks in 1941, having produced six straight state championships. That experience was a tremendous boost for the community and was reflected in emphasis on excellence in all aspects of education and school related activities.

The "Messiah" is first presented on December 12, 1938 by the vocal music department under the baton of Miss Elizabeth Sheen. The solemn presentation will become an annual event looked forward to by students and alumni alike.

In 1939, in addition to remodeling and improvement of several schools, three new schools were built. L.E. York Elementary School was constructed on Massachusetts Avenue S.E. It contained six rooms; three were used as classrooms; two as an auditorium, and one as a library. Provisions were made so that a second floor and a gym could be added.

Whittier Elementary School was also built in 1939. It is located on the northeast corner of the present Tenth Street N.E. and Rotch Avenue N.E. This new site for Whittier (formerly on State Street) was chosen because it was more centrally located for the children of the northeast section

of Massillon. The school contained twelve rooms and a combination gymnasium-auditorium. It was as very modern facility from stoker-fired boilers to indirect lighting.

Emerson Elementary School was built in 1939 on the northwest corner of Seventh Street S.W. and Walnut Road S.W. This building was an exact duplicate of Whittier Elementary School.

In 1939, as part of Massillon's P.W.A. school expansion project, an athletic field was developed and Tiger Stadium built. This new athletic field was located in southeast Massillon. It was bounded approximately by Oak Avenue S.E. Extension on the north; 16th Street S.E. on the west; Harsh Avenue S.E. on the south; and innumerable lots on the east. The total cost of the stadium project was approximately \$246,000. Of that amount, the Massillon Board of Education paid \$91,000, and the federal government paid the balance. This stadium is one of the finest of its kind, and is exceptionally well equipped. Since its completion, many thousands of Massillon citizens and many residents of other states have enjoyed the various programs presented there. Not only has the stadium been used for athletic contests, but also for countless civic affairs. Tiger Stadium has been and will undoubtedly continue to be a source of pride for all Massillon residents.

The band program is rooted early on with the orchestra that first appeared in the yearbooks in the early 1900s. The football band was formed in 1914 and is considered the first of its kind in Ohio. The band was a traditional military style band that grew in numbers and popularity. Clem Morrison became the first full time director in 1927 of the entire city school music program. In 1938, George Bird was hired as the director and his use of the "measured step" metered marching per five yards, movements and steps cued by the music and the use of the halftime show as a theater production revolutionized marching bands throughout the country. The use of popular, patriotic and "swing" music completed with props, costumes and lights made the marching band an icon of itself. It was uniquely titled as the "Tiger Swing Band." A student dressed in a "live" tiger costume became the band's and school's mascot.

In the 1943-44 school year the Girls Auxiliary Bond Saleswomen were formed at Washington

High School. Bond sales were pushed at football games and the girls were credited with more than \$100,000 in sales. A bomber was christened "Spirit of Massillon" in their honor and they were allowed to name a flying fortress "The Flying Tiger." A United States freighter was also named in honor of the city's war effort.

The year 1948 marked the arrival of Chuck Mather, who stayed six years and posted an amazing (53-3-0) record. His Tiger teams scored 2,227 points and allowed but 432. Coach Mather beat McKinley all six years and won six state championships and three national championships. Following a pair of 9-1-0 seasons, Mather turned out an undefeated team in 1950, the first Massillon team since 1940 to score 400 points. The 1950 Tiger team ranks as one of the best in history. The Touchdown Club was organized during Coach Mather's tenure. It meets at lunch each Tuesday during the season to let the coach update this social/business group on Tiger football.

In 1954 Mather became coach at the University of Kansas. 1955 and 1956 saw Coach Tom Harp pilot the Tigers to a 17-2-1 record and a state title. He moved on to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point as an assistant coach.

On January 2, 1956, the Massillon "Tiger Swing Band" under the direction of Orin Ford became the first band east of the Mississippi River to march in the prestigious "Tournament of Roses Parade" in Pasadena, California.

Lee Tressel, also at the Tiger helm for two seasons, lost two games (Mansfield and McKinley) in 1956. The Tigers' only loss in 1957 was to state champion Benedictine (13-7). Coach Tressel helped the Booster Club organize the "Sideliners" in 1957. The Sideliners are a group of individuals who act as "big brothers" for the varsity gridgers. Each active Sideliner is assigned a Tiger player to help him in any way possible. The Sideliners meet with "their players" before and after each game. Weekly, the players and Sideliners attend a meal the night prior to the game. Coach Tressel was hired as head coach at Baldwin Wallace in 1958.

The next six years (1958-63) found Leo Strang the Tiger head coach. Leo was known for his classy uniforms and "Leaping Tiger" helmet decals. His record was magnificent. The record of 54-

8-1 gave Massillon three state and two national championships.

The total enrollment in Massillon public schools continued to increase, reaching approximately 6,000 in 1957/1958. More teaching space was needed. In 1957 the new 25-classroom Franklin School on 16th Street S.E. and the 12-classroom Gorrell Building between 22nd and 23rd Streets S.W. opened at the start of the school term. An eight-room addition to Whittier Elementary School was dedicated in February 1957. Old Lincoln School was razed in 1957, and new Lincoln School was dedicated in November, 1958, followed closely by additions to Jones Junior High School and Emerson Elementary School.

As the increased enrollment rolled upward, an addition to the high school was added in 1959. It included a new swimming pool, a vocational wing, and a new library.

In 1964, Coach Strang became head coach at Kent State University. Earl Bruce was hired as the new Tiger head coach. Coach Bruce's Tigers went 20-0-0 and won two state titles. The highlights of those two years were the victory over Niles in the Akron Rubber Bowl before 30,128 fans — it ended Niles 48 game winning streak — and two come-from-behind victories over McKinley. Coach Bruce left to join Woody Hayes' staff at Ohio State in 1966.

The year 1966 brought to town Bob Seaman, a young coach with only two years as head coach. During the next three years Massillon experienced its only losing season since 1931 with a 4-5-1 record in 1966, and won only 20 of 30 games.

In 1969 Massillon hired head Bob Cummings, a dynamic coach from Struthers, Ohio. Coach Cummings quickly restored the Tiger tradition. In 1970 he guided the Tigers to a state title with a 10-0-0 season. Coach Cummings was one of the most colorful coaches in Massillon history. His five-year record was 43-6-2. Cummings became head coach at the University of Iowa in 1974.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1974, band director Jim Billingsley marched the "Tiger Swing Band" through New York City's Macy Department Store Christmas Parade. The appearance was completely televised nationally on NBC TV.

March 17, 1985 the Massillon "Tiger Swing Band," directed by Ric Tissot, marched before a

million onlookers in New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade, the nations largest.

In 1988, the Massillon Tiger Football Booster Club took on the project of providing artificial turf for Paul Brown Tiger Stadium. The "Omni Sand Turf" was accepted by the Board of Education on February 27, 1989.

Original Washington High School was built in 1914 on the corner of First and Oak Streets S.E. Additions were made in 1922, 1936, 1957 and 1965, utilizing most of the area between Oak and South Streets from First Street to Third Street. Most of the building, especially older parts, did not meet modern building codes.

The idea of building a new high school had been discussed for a long time. A bond issue for a new high school was defeated in November 1979 and June 1980. The issue lay dormant until the fall of 1984 when the School Educational Facilities Evaluation Committee was formed at the request of the Massillon Board of Education. This committee's mandate was to study and recommend future high school facilities for Massillon.

After passage of the issue in November 1988, there was much work to be done not only in finalizing design for the school but also in reorganizing the schools for transition when the new high school was complete. Ninth grade was to move to WHS from Longfellow and Lorin Andrews Junior High Schools, which were to become middle schools. Sixth grades from the elementary schools were to move into the newly designated middle schools. This reorganization was a monumental task for the teachers and administrative staff, especially for the middle school and curriculum staffs.

The middle school concept is totally different from the junior high school concept. From November 1988 until September 1991, the teachers and administrative staffs were trained and the curriculum changed to meet the qualifications of a middle school. Curriculum at the high school had to be expanded and adjusted to accommodate the ninth graders moving to the high school. The teachers and administrators put in a lot of extra time and effort in making the changes. They worked before school, after school and during summers to be ready for the smooth transition that took place.

Officially, ground was broken for the project on March 17, 1990. Students moved into the new facility in November 1992. It contains 291,000 square feet housing 90 classrooms and a variety of other instructional areas. Also included are an auditorium seating 1,000, a main gymnasium seating 2,800, an auxiliary gymnasium seating 400, and a cafeteria. There is room in the cafeteria for 500 at lunch and the facility can be expanded to hold more than 900 for banquets using hall space. A focal point of the building is the Library-Media Center, which accommodates 140 students in a wide variety of learning environments.

Design of the school was accomplished interacting with teachers, students and administrators to accommodate 1,800 students. Initial enrollment including grades 9-12 was approximately 1,400. The construction of the building uses non-load-bearing walls so that the interior can be changed to meet instructional needs of the future. A school/community telecommunications network ties Washington High School and the rest of the city schools to the community, allowing events to be broadcast to other buildings as well as the community.

The vocal music program encompassing the A Capella Choir, both Men's and Women's Choruses and the "Washingtonians" show choir under the directions of R. Byron Griest, (1952-1974 era) Karen L. Bushman (1974-1990 era) and Loren Veigel (1990s to 2006) has become the highest awarded "Superior" rated choir program in the state Ohio Music Educators Association.

In the fall of 2005, the new Massillon Middle School opened on the far west side of town, housing students in grade 5-6 in one wing and 7-8 in the other with commons areas of cafeteria, auditorium and library. This building is located on 29th Street N.W. The summer of 2006 saw the demolition of both Longfellow and Loren Andrews buildings to much local fanfare.

As the school years 2007 and beyond approach, the Massillon City Schools are poised for many more years of success thanks dedicated leadership from the various Boards of Education members, administration personnel, dedicated faculty, coaches, parents and alumni; and of course to the children of the community who embrace the legacies they inherited.

# MASSILLON WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL...TODAY!



*Washington H.S. Street Entrance  
"1 Paul Brown Drive"*

*Massillon City Schools central office  
complex, 207 Oak Street S.E.,  
Massillon, OH 44046*





## AND...PAUL BROWN TIGER STADIUM



## W.H.S. ALMA MATER

— C. M. Layton

Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
We stand to sing thy praise,  
With hearts that thrill with worthy pride  
At thoughts of high school days.

Thy friendships true, thy spirit too,  
A part of us shall be,  
Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
We're true to thee.

And through the long, long years to come,  
Wherever we may be,  
Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
We're true to thee.

Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
God keep thee ever so,  
Thy sons and daughters stand four square  
To all the winds that blow.

And as the seasons come and go,  
We only ask, may we,  
Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
Be more like thee.

And through the long, long years to come,  
Wherever we may be,  
Oh, Alma Mater, Massillon,  
We're true to thee.