

History of Tallmadge School Buildings

An article entitled *Tallmadge School in 1900* published in the *Blu-Gold Parade* on November 22, 1950 described early Tallmadge School buildings:

Three years after ox-drawn wagons brought the first settlers from their homes in Connecticut to David Bacon's new township of Tallmadge in the Western Reserve, the children of the new land were attending school. Log cabins had been erected in the wilderness, church meetings held in the homes, land cleared that food might be produced and now their thoughts turned to education. Rev. David Bacon, founder of Tallmadge, in his plan for the settlement of the town, arranged for an academy and a grade school at the center and a district school at each of the six corners. On the hill now used as the cemetery, Rev. Bacon hoped to build Western Reserve College, the "Yale of New Connecticut." The last part of his plan never materialized.

Mrs. Jotham Blakeslee, wife of the village blacksmith, decided that Tallmadge children must be educated. Records tell us that she journeyed alone through heavy woods of Suffield, making the trips as was customary, on horseback. Here she engaged Miss Lucy Foster to teach the school. A small log building was erected just south of the four corners on South Ave. Unfortunately, we have no record of this, our first school.

In 1815, a large frame building was built at the center of the plot now occupied by the Congregational church. The upper room was used for an academy and the lower for the grade school. The building stood in the woods and the giant trees in the yard furnished wood for the huge fireplaces which heated the rooms.

Records tell us that the two room arrangement in the school was the cause of many a feud and that they were not always bloodless. This idea was carried down through the years when the district pupils were known as "Districtites" and the academy students as "Kity Kites."

The first teacher was Rev. Woodruff who taught two years and was succeeded by Deacon Wright. This academy was of a high character and at this time was the only school in northern Ohio of a higher grade than the district school. It was said that no one could get a school in Northern Ohio who had not at least "rubbed his back against Tallmadge Academy."

The school year was composed of four twelve-week terms. Pupils paid four dollars to attend the grade school for one term, four and one half dollars for higher grades and five and a half dollars to study the classics for twelve weeks. His tuition might be paid in grain, potatoes or cured meat.

As time passed and more families came to make their home in Tallmadge, the demand for schools increased and in 1830, there was a district school at each six corners, one at the center and one on each of the straight roads leading out of town. In 1842, there were 922 pupils enrolled in the township. East Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and Stow sent their children to Tallmadge.

Books, paper, pencils and slates were scarce articles in those days and teachers were hampered by the lack of these items. These were the days when the teacher "boarded 'round", living with each family, the length of her stay depending on the number of pupils in the family.



Northeast District School at the six corners (now a roundabout) at N. Munroe, Howe and Northeast Avenue still exists as a private residence. Boys and girls had separate entrances.

A teacher's salary in that time would seem ridiculously small today. In 1839, we find the school board paying twenty-four dollars to Miss Lucinda Fenn for teaching four months and twenty-six dollars to Miss Abigail Wright for like term. The teacher's salary was based on the number of pupils she taught.

Those early schools took pride in their libraries. The first library in the town was established in 1813. A few years later a "Ladies Library" came into being. The two were consolidated later and became the nucleus of the present school library.

Tallmadge pioneers took the initiative in many ways and one such was the establishment of the first school in the state for the deaf and dumb. The third year of the organization of this school, it was transferred to its present site at Columbus.

When the present town hall was built in 1859, the upper room was finished and furnished for the academy and was so used until our present graded system superseded the academy. Fire has caused much damage to school buildings throughout the years. In 1870, the town purchased land on the north road, the present school site, and a fine new building was erected of which Tallmadge was justly proud. Six years later, this building burned, the fire resulting from an overheated furnace. In the summer, the building was rebuilt.

The plan of centralization of the public schools was adopted by Tallmadge about 1915 and by means of horse drawn wagons, pupils from the district schools were transported to the school at the center.

The efforts of Tallmadge people have certainly been commendable, in early days and at the present time. Such is a brief history of the schools of Tallmadge during the past one hundred forty years.

The "school at the center" mentioned in this article is the oldest of the school buildings on North Avenue, just north of the Circle. It was built in 1910. Buildings were added in 1922 and 1939 and an addition was built in 1963. From 1915 until 1950, all grades were centralized in this cluster of buildings. In 1950, a stadium was dedicated for Tallmadge High on Overdale Road. With the post-World War II baby boom came the need for additional school buildings: Dunbar school (1950), Overdale school (1953). In 1955, additions were made to Dunbar and Overdale.

The 1960's saw additional building. In 1960, a high school was built at 484 North Avenue. Even as it opened in September 1960, it was over-capacity. A stadium was added on the same property and the stadium on Overdale Road became the Junior High stadium. In 1963, Monroe Elementary School opened. In 1966, David Bacon Elementary School opened on Strecker Drive. From 1966, until the mid-1980's, the school district was comprised of four K-6 elementary schools (Dunbar, Overdale, Monroe and David Bacon), Central Junior High (grades 7 - 9) and the high school (grades 10 - 12).

Additions were made to the High School in 1970: two classroom wings, a hexagonal multi-purpose room, a library, guidance offices and additional cafeteria space. In the late 1980's, the district purchase the ten acres to the west of the school, where the Tallmadge Athletic Boosters provided money and manual labor to clear the orchard and build softball fields. In the 1990's, a 1,600 square foot weight and physical fitness room was added on the west side of the building. Modular classroom units were installed in 2000 to provide two additional classrooms.



The Center Graded School housed grades 1 through 8 in three rooms. When it burned in 1871, it was rebuilt and a three year high school program was added. The building was razed in 1912.

The 1980's saw the beginning of an era of elementary school closings, realignment of attendance areas and grade level reorganization. First the four K-6 attendance areas were reduced to two K-4 areas. Children living on the north side of East/West Avenues went to Munroe for K-4, and those on the south side went to Dunbar. Munroe students went to Overdale for fifth and sixth grades; likewise, Dunbar students went to David Bacon. Eventually, it didn't make economic sense to keep four elementary schools. As the smallest of the elementary buildings, David Bacon and Overdale schools were closed in 1985 and 1986 respectively. Goodyear would lease David Bacon as a training site for the next 20 years. Neighborhood schools were replaced by grade level, community-wide schools, which is a configuration that remains today. Central Junior High became Tallmadge Middle School for sixth, seventh and eighth graders in 1987. Ninth graders were moved to the high school that same year.

Following a mini-boom in the 1990's, Overdale School was reopened in 1995 which resulted in this organization of elementary buildings: all K-1 students at Overdale, second and third graders at Dunbar, and fourth and fifth graders at Munroe. As of 2007, David Bacon housed the offices of Student Services personnel, the Summit County Preschool program for disabled 3-5 year olds, and a Six District Educational Compact vocational program for those interested in a career in preschool and childcare.

In September 2008, students started attending a new high school built at 140 N. Munroe Road, just north of East Avenue. The 170,000 square foot building houses students in grades 9 - 12. Under a rotunda in the center of the building is a 6,000-square-foot, 48-foot high circular commons area which is also used for student dining. From the commons, there are two two-story academic wings, an arts/auditorium wing and an athletics/gymnasium wing. Classrooms, located in the building's west and south education wings,

are fashioned with equipment on the cutting edge of educational technology. Subjects are clustered in classrooms per teacher input. The wings may be expanded for future growth in school enrollment, if necessary. The 650-seat auditorium with state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems provides a venue for district and community performances and events. It features a theater stage, orchestra pit, tech booth,



rehearsal room with dedicated art, band and vocal rooms with space for band uniform and scenery storage, with a separate entrance and concession area located in the building's north wing. The athletics/gym wing features a 1,300-seat, college-size basketball court, an ancillary gym, weight room and concession area, with separate entrance. Situated between the wings are the food service area, the library, with separate computer lab, electrical/mechanical service zones for energy and maintenance efficiency, administrative offices and a 72-seat multi-purpose room available for student, staff and community use. The high school stadium (since 1981, called Rossiaky Stadium) remains at 484 East Ave.

Also in September 2008, the Middle School moved to the old high school at 484 East Avenue. The school buildings and property on North Avenue were sold and in 2010, all the buildings except the 1910 building were razed by the new owner.

Overdale was again closed in 2011. After much deliberation, school officials eventually decided to reconfigure building structures for children in kindergarten through fifth grade and close down Overdale Primary School. As of the current school year, students in kindergarten through second grade now attend Dunbar Primary, and third through fifth grades now attend Munroe Elementary. Tallmadge Middle School continues to house grades 6 - 8 and Tallmadge High School houses grades 9 - 12.