



LIVE BRANCH IN RUINS - 1913

PERRY PHOTO

Fire destroyed Olive Branch School on Nov. 10, 1913. The pupils lost their coats and lunch boxes but saved the piano

Rural high school a county first

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Clark County can claim several "firsts" and one of them is the first rural high school in Ohio. In 1878, the year Rutherford B. Hayes served as president, a state law permitted rural school districts to build high schools. Prior to this date, high schools could only be established in villages or cities.

Following passage of the 1878 legislation, William Wise, C.S. Forgy, and J.E. Williams formed plans to establish a high school. Olive Branch was selected as the name and Robert H. Taylor was the first principal. The school opened in the fall of 1880.

The central location of the new high school was determined by revolutions of a buggy wheel with a white marker to designate the number of turns. The directors counted the revolutions from the four corners of the district and the present location of the stone building was selected. Because of some dispute over the location the name, Olive Branch, with Biblical significance, was chosen.

Members of the first graduating class, (The Class of 1884) were: Joseph Aston, William Wallace, May Dorcas, Willis Wise, Frank Hayes, Benjamin Lamme, and Hannah Frantz.

A new building was needed to take care of increased population from the 11 elementary schools with their 14 teachers. The old schoolhouse was to be destroyed to make room for the new but an injunction was secured by opponents. The injunction expired at 12:05 p.m., June 7, 1901. Directors William Scarff, Albert Koontz and William Wallace met at the old schoolhouse and with sledge hammers destroyed the north wall of the first school before a new injunction could be issued.

The center of the school district is approximately Garfield Grove where President Garfield made his Ohio campaign speech, hence the name. Because of potential flooding in the area the school was built on land west of the tracks at Forgy Station on land donated by the Forgy's. There were

very little real estate taxes because the steam power plant built in Peoria and Eastern Railroad paid enough taxes to support the schools.

Information for the above was provided by Mrs. Don (Millie) Wallace, one of Clark County's grand ladies.



The second Olive Branch building was constructed in 1901 and burned Nov. 10, 1913. Don Wallace, Marvin Siefert, Marjorie Bucher Blair and Ruth Bower Day were among those present when the fire occurred. They lost their coats and lunch boxes but saved the piano.

The third Olive Branch, a round stone building constructed in 1914 at a cost of \$11,000, still stands near the present Middle School, 9712 W. National Rd., New Carlisle.