

A History of the Ann Arbor High School

1856—1956

ON OCTOBER 5, 1856, Ann Arbor High School opened its doors to a group of eleven young men and women. In June, 1956, the high school will graduate 401 seniors. Much has happened between these two widely separated dates.

The school was located on South State Street, the site of the building which has just been vacated. The land was purchased for \$2,000 and consisted of one and three-quarters acres which had been used for pasture land and an occasional circus.

The school has not always been known as the Ann Arbor High School but was called at first the Union School and later the Union High School. The building, constructed of brick and stone at a cost of \$32,000, was intended to accommodate 200 students; but within ten years twice that number were in attendance. Consequently in 1871 an addition which doubled the original size was erected. This building burned in 1904, and in 1906 it was replaced by the present structure on South State Street. Since that time three major changes have been made in the building: the modernization of the gymnasium and the extensive rebuilding of the auditorium in 1936, and the large modern addition in 1939. When the building was vacated in March of this year, there were 1,374 students in attendance.

The first courses offered by the school were preparatory to college; in 1877 commercial courses were added. Since then work in music, industrial arts, home economics, physical education, vocational training, machine shop, painting and decorating, cooperative occupational training, and driver education has been added as the growing needs of the community dictated.

The power and prestige which the high school enjoys in state academic circles are due in large measure to a series of outstanding principals. The first principal was Theophilus Capen Abbott, who resigned in 1858 to become a professor of English at Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University); in 1863 he was made president of the college. Judge Claudius Buchanan Grant, who was principal from 1860 to 1862, later became a regent of the University and a justice of the Supreme Court of Michigan.

Among the several outstanding principals who have served the Ann Arbor High School since then, three deserve special mention. One of them is Judson G. Pattengill, who was principal from 1877 to 1908. Several major extra-curricular activities had their inception under Mr. Pattengill's leadership: the *Omega*, the high school yearbook, was first published in 1884, and the first football team dates back to 1885. The second principal who made a notable contribution was Lewis L. Forsythe, serving from 1917 to 1946. Mr. Forsythe started his career as principal at the beginning of one world war and ended it at the conclusion of another. The present principal is Nicholas Schreiber who assumed his duties in 1946.

There were only eight teachers including Principal Abbott on the staff when the Union School opened in 1856; today there are seventy-nine. Among the teachers who in the past have given their toil, their inspiration, and the best years of their

lives are Horatio N. Chute, physics teacher, Levi D. Wines, mathematics teacher, Sara O'Brien, history teacher, and Alice Porter, Latin teacher. All were great instructors who left the impress of their personalities on their pupils. The memory of at least two of them is preserved in the medals which are presented each June to the outstanding boy and the outstanding girl in the graduating class: the Horatio N. Chute medal to the boy and the Alice Porter medal to the girl.

Ann Arbor High School has contributed its share of combatants in the six military conflicts in which our country engaged during the past one hundred years: the Civil War, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War. In the Tower entrance corridor of this building the names of those loyal students who died in the First and the Second World Wars in the defense of their country are inscribed on bronze tablets.

In the field of athletics Ann Arbor High School has made a name for itself in state scholastic circles. As early as 1898 the football team won its first undisputed championship; and since that time its teams in football, basketball, baseball, tennis, golf, track, and swimming have made enviable records throughout the years. The name "Pioneers," which designates all teams sponsored by the Athletic Association, was not adopted until 1936. The name was acceptable because Ann Arbor High School is a pioneer in the true sense of the word, being one of the first schools in the state to have an organized athletic program.

But aside from the war record and the athletic record, important as they were, they yield in significance to the high level of scholarship which the school has zealously and persistently maintained. Tangible proof of this may be found in the many graduates who have gone from its doors to make notable successes in such fields as art, literature, and science.

In March of this year the old school closed its doors forever, and the building has become a part of the University. The building in which we find ourselves today is the cumulative result of many, many hours of thought and labor on the part of the principal, the superintendent of schools, the Board of Education, the Citizens' Committee, and the high school faculty. Because of this planning the building has incorporated within it the best in existing school construction; but it also anticipates the future in its planetarium, weather station, radio and television studios, and other unique features.

It is a notable achievement to round out a century of progress, but in this dynamic age one cannot dwell nostalgically in the past. By a coincidence we end our first one-hundred years in one building and begin the next in another. What part will the new Ann Arbor High School play? What great strides will the world make in the humanities, technology, science? Such a world will place ever-increasing responsibilities upon its citizens. We look to the new school to play its part in preparing its students to assume a meaningful and progressive role in this world.