

## The History of the Hamilton Local School District

By Kelli Lester, Student Services, Hamilton Intermediate – May 29, 2008 (Updated May 2011)

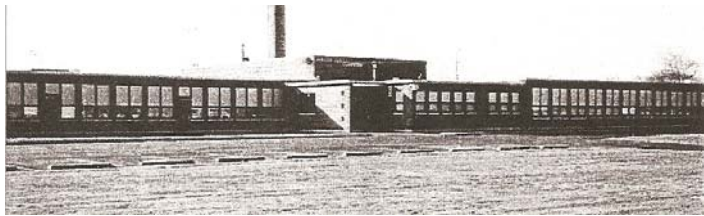
The Hamilton Local School District is a small, rural district located in the southern section of Franklin County, Ohio in Hamilton Township. In the early beginnings, dating back to 1842, the first school in Hamilton Township was kept in an unoccupied log cabin on a farm. A few years later, the first schoolhouse was erected. Hamilton Township had a total population of 1,485 in 1850. In 1853, the township consisted of 13 school districts with an aggregate of 560 youth between the ages of 5 and 21. Prior to 1873, there were 14 sub-districts in the township, each numbered and each with a school. However, after 1873, two of the districts became a part of another township, three were consolidated with other districts, and one new sub-district was created. This left the township with ten sub-district schools.

In the early years and even up into the 1920's, the one-room school houses contained eight grades with just one teacher who was responsible for educating the diverse age group. Throughout the late 1800's and the early to mid 1900's the smaller sub-district schools closed one-by-one and the students were sent to the Shadeville, Lockbourne, or Obetz schools in the township. Eventually, these three schools merged and became what is now known as the Hamilton Local School District.



One change that had a huge impact on the community and the schools was the opening, and closing of an airbase located in the southeastern part of the district. According to an online article titled *About Rickenbacker*, “On December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army announced that a \$7.5 million airbase would be built just east of the Village of Lockbourne”, (p. 1). The opening of the base in the district added military jobs to the area, families to the community, and children to the schools. “However, in June 1949, the base was deactivated, and control transferred to the Ohio Air National Guard. For the next 18 months, Air National Guard used the base for training”, (p. 1). In 1950 the Korean War began and the base was reactivated and expanded. “Throughout the 1950's, the Strategic Air Command used the base as a training facility and stationed aircraft on full-time alert duty for national defense”, (p. 1). During the 1960's and the Vietnam War years the base grew even larger, “reaching an all-time peak of more than 18,000 service people in 1967”, (p. 2).

The growth at the military base, led to the growth of the school district and the need for school buildings necessary to educate all of the children. It was during this time that the district's current buildings were constructed. According to the information compiled by *Early History of Hamilton Township Schools*, “Hamilton Central Elementary



was built in 1953, Hamilton South Elementary was built in 1956 for children living on the base, Hamilton Kindergarten Building in 1966, Hamilton Middle School in 1969, and

the United States Office of Education cooperated to build a million dollar addition to the high school building in 1962”, (p.22).

The airbase and the district flourished throughout the 1950’s, the 1960’s, and the early 1970’s. However, the ending of the Vietnam War and the military draft led to the closing and downsizing of military bases in the United States. As stated in the article, *About Rickenbacker*,



In April 1978, the Air Force announced that Strategic Air Command functions at Rickenbacker were to be transferred elsewhere, estimating that 12,000 jobs would be lost as a result. In September 1979, with the base population at 2,800 military and civilian employees, the Base Closure Commission announced plans for closing the base. In April 1980, Rickenbacker Air Force Base closed, and the facility was turned over to the Ohio Air National Guard, (p. 2).

The closing of the base and the loss of the military jobs drastically altered the demographics and dynamics of the Hamilton School District. Although the closing of the base did not change the entire district, it had a large impact on the student population. Immediately following the base closure, the district’s enrollment declined. Then, the air base housing, where the military personnel and their families resided, became subsidized government housing. This resulted in a different socio-economic background of a large portion of the students in the district.

Today, there are 3,079 students from the villages of Obetz and Lockbourne and Hamilton Township enrolled in the school district. The district currently consists of five separate facilities, a board office, a high school, a middle school, an intermediate school, and a new elementary building. The intermediate building, which was the first building project in the district since the early 1960’s, was built with local bond money. It opened in 2003 to students in grades 4 - 6. The district, along with the Ohio Schools Facilities Commission, is now in the process of constructing three new buildings: an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. The new elementary building joined the students from Hamilton Central and Hamilton South for the first time, when it opened its doors in September of 2007. The middle school staff and students moved into their new building in January of 2008, and the new high school opened to the students and staff in August 2009.



With the Master Building Plan completed, Hamilton Local School District will have new facilities at every grade level. In addition to building new facilities for the students of the Hamilton Local School District, the administration and the teaching staff have been working diligently toward the goal of increased student achievement and improvement on the Ohio Department of Education State Report Card. Since these efforts began in the Fall of

2004, student achievement has increased significantly, and our district has moved from “Academic Watch” to “Excellent” on the state report card. Although student achievement scores have improved dramatically, there are still improvements to be made.