

On November 24, 1965, an application to form a joint vocational school district in Wayne County was signed by John R. Lea, Superintendent of Wayne County Public Schools; Willard Hauenstein, Superintendent of Rittman Exempted Village Schools, who served as coordinator and chairman of the committee; Howard Netzly, Superintendent of Orrville City Schools; Donald Cobb and Sam Yelic, Superintendents of Chippewa Local Schools; and Paul Ladd, Principal of Wooster High School.

The Ohio State Board of Education approved the creation of the Wayne County Joint Vocational School on December 13, 1965. It would be the 15th joint vocational school started in Ohio.

The school was centrally located in Smithville, and was made to serve high school juniors and seniors from all 10 Wayne County public school districts:

- Dalton
- Doylestown (now Chippewa)
- Northwestern
- Norwayne
- Orrville
- Rittman
- Smithville
- Triway
- Waynedale
- Wooster

Each of the 10 school boards donated \$600 to the current expenses of the new joint vocational district. After passage of a .525 mills construction and equipment levy and a 1.30 mills operating levy on Nov. 8, 1966, the money was returned to the districts. Matching funds were provided by the State of Ohio.

It took the concerted effort of hundreds of educators, local skilled tradespeople, managers, agricultural and business owners and agencies to ensure that the school would meet the needs of Wayne County's flourishing business and industry.

Advisory committees were formed to examine each program, what would be taught and what equipment would be available for the students, so they would always learn the latest technology.

The first meeting of the Board of Education was held at the Wooster High School Cafeteria on January 13, 1966. Board members were:

Robert West, President; Dr. John Miller, Vice President; Harold Buss, Donald Dice, M.W. Douglas, Clifford Emerson, Arthur Irvin, Glenn Neal, Ed Sherck.

John R. Lea was first superintendent, elected on a temporary basis. Robert Zimpfer of Perrysburg was hired as first director for \$12,000 a year, and later became superintendent. R.E. Slusser of Dalton was hired as first treasurer at \$3.50 an hour in June of 1966. William Kerr was hired as treasurer on December 15, 1966.

On January 5, 1967, the district purchased 55.43 acres of land in Smithville for \$800 per acre. Concern over acreage was raised when the Ohio Department of Highways indicated possible rerouting of State Route 5 (now Route 585) through the school's acreage.

The Wayne Adult School of Practical Nursing opened, meeting at the Second Baptist Church in Wooster. The first class graduated in 1968.

The first office for the JVS was located at 143 W. Main Street in Smithville, in the Smithville First National Bank building.

Architect for the building was John L. Kline of John Kline Associates, Springfield, Ohio.

In February 1968, the board contracted with Freeman Construction Company of Wooster for a building at a cost of \$3,262,720. The original building was 155,000 square feet, with a capacity of 1,000 students.

In March of 1968, the board hired Harold Fulton as guidance counselor, Glen Boling as vocational agriculture instructor, and Barbara Cadmus as secretary for the supervisory staff. Supervisors hired were Lee Fundom, trades and industrial education; Lynn Welker, pupil personnel.

Salaries for supervisors were set at \$8,750 for nine months of work. The plan included a provision for one-third more pay for three months of summer duty, and \$280 for additional responsibilities. Those working 12 months would receive approximately \$11,947.

In December of 1968, Willard Hauenstein was elected acting superintendent of the new WCJVS.

Wednesday, September 3, 1969 was the first day school was opened for 490 students, mostly high school juniors. Almost all the students stayed at the JVS throughout the year, as by the end of the school year, the enrollment was still 470. The school day lasted from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lunch prices for students were only 40 cents, and 50 cents for adults.

There were 35 staff members at the school opening, and 50 when the school reached full operation.

A dedication ceremony was held on Sunday, Nov. 2, 1969. Governor James A. Rhodes was keynote speaker. The Smithville High School band played "Beautiful Ohio" when the governor arrived at the ceremony. Twenty students were chosen to represent the 20 training areas offered at the WCJVS.