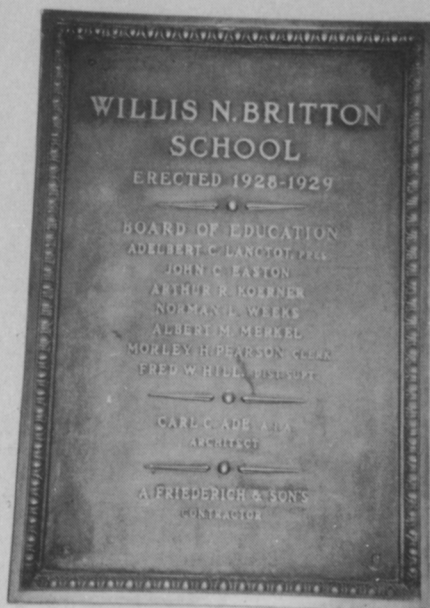




**HOOVER DRIVE'S
"ODYSSEY"
1929 - 1999**



We wish to dedicate this brief history to the second principal of the Willis N. Britton/Greece Central School # 1 whose excellent notes and scrapbooks helped to piece this history together.

In Memory of
Milton V Pullen
1906-1999



HOOVER DRIVE'S "ODYSSEY" FROM 1929 TO 1999

History is recorded for the future generations. Often times, we fail to record what is happening at present and our future generations lose some of the details of what happened in the past. This history of the Hoover Drive building has been pieced together as closely as possible from information in books, news clippings, and stories from neighborhood residents and former students who attended the school. Although it might not be complete, it is a recorded history for future generations.

Marianne Himmelsbach

The Town of Greece has a rich history dating back to as far as 10,000 B.C. when the last Labrodorian glacier receded. In the following years various Indian Nations began hunting, fishing, and establishing camps in the area. In 1792 William Henshaw (also spelled Hinchey, or Hencher), a soldier in the American Revolution, was the first recorded settler to make his home in the Town of Greece. He built his home near the mouth of the Genesee (where the Charlotte lighthouse now stands behind Holy Cross Church). *It should be noted that Charlotte was once a part of the Town of Greece until it was annexed by the City of Rochester in January of 1915. At that time Greece lost 457 square acres of land.*

On April 4, 1797 the area west of the Genesee and along Lake Ontario

was known as the Town of Northampton. On December 8, 1807 the Town of Northampton was divided into four separate towns; Pulteney, Bayard, Fairfield (now Ogden, Parma and Braddocks Bay), and Northampton (now Greece and Gates). Northampton was renamed Gates on January 10, 1812. On March 22, 1822 Gates was divided into two smaller towns; the southern portion became the Town of Gates and the northern and most populated portion became Greece. It is thought that the Town of Greece was named out of sympathy for the Greek Revolution of 1821.

The school system in this area began long before the Town of Greece received it's name or had defined boundaries. The "Act for Encouragement of Schools" was passed by the New York State legislature in 1795 and thus began state aid to schools for public education. This legislation provided for English and Math instruction for children 5 - 15 years of age. Peter Shaffer was elected first school commissioner in 1798. Legislation was modified in 1812 and required towns to raise funds, through taxation, equal to its' state grant. Throughout the ensuing years various laws were passed and some abolished, with the outcome being that common schools were declared free to all children.

By 1830 there were 10 Common School Districts within the boundaries of the Town of Greece. There were three additional Common School Districts whose boundaries fell partially within the Town of Greece and also within surrounding towns. Each of these Common School Districts had a one room schoolhouse with one teacher who taught all grade levels. It is assumed that grades K-8 were taught in these schools, since high schools were not developed until much later.

Between December 1897 and 1916 Greece high school students attended either Charlotte, Parma, Spencerport or Kodak Union High Schools (the later now known as John Marshall High) depending upon where they lived within the town.

In April of 1915, after the City of Rochester annexed the portion of Greece which is now Charlotte, the city extended the "Free Tuition School District" to Greece District # 4 (the NE corner of Greece approximately from Dewey Ave. East to the city boundary). This meant that Greece students could attend city schools at no extra tuition cost.

In 1914 and 1925 the Central Rural Schools Acts were approved by New York State. The later provided for an increase of state aid for construction of school buildings and transportation of students, thus trying to encourage schools to centralize. Prior to the Central Rural Schools Acts the existing schools in Greece were becoming overcrowded. Building additions were necessary and double sessions were being discussed. Greece residents opposed the tax increases to make the necessary changes to accommodate the growing school district. It was also during this time that the Koda-Vista tract (where Odyssey School stands) was being developed. It is here that the history of the school building at 133 Hoover Drive begins.

It is speculated that Ridgeway Avenue (once known as "Big Ridge") and

Ridge Road - Route 104 (once known as "Little Ridge Road") were created from deposits left along the shoreline of a receding glacial lake. In 1804 Ridge Road was cut through a forest as far west as Long Pond Road and became a military route during the War of 1812. In 1813 this muddy road was made passable for wagon travel and thus the onslaught of pioneers.

Sir John Lowther Johnstone of Webster Hall in Scotland owned a large parcel of land, which included what we know today as the Koda-Vista neighborhood. It is speculated that Johnstone never lived in the United States, but owned the land for investment purposes only. When Johnstone died in 1815 the parcel was sold to Aaron Lay of Gates. At that time the Koda-Vista area was part of Gates until Gates divided into the two smaller towns of Greece and Gates. That is how the neighborhood became a part of Greece.

Prior to World War I this area was mainly orchards. Apples, pears, peaches, cherries, and other berries grew on the land where today we see Kodak, businesses, homes and a school. It was during this time period that the Lay surname could be found on many maps and abstracts of the area. Frederick (F.W.) Lay owned much of the land in the area including the future Koda-Vista area.

Lay was also a trustee of School # 11, which was organized in the 1850s, and was located approximately where Home Depot now stands at the corner of Mt. Read Blvd. and Ridge Road. This schoolhouse is thought to be the predecessor of the current school building at 133 Hoover Drive. In fact School # 11 remained open until the Willis N. Britton School opened on Hoover Drive in 1929. In its' day, the two room schoolhouse had two teachers who would board with local families during the school year.

Nellie Dyson-Carter, whose father was a prominent landowner in the Koda-Vista and surrounding area in the late 1800s and early 1900s, was also a trustee of School # 11 in the early 1920s. In the January 1989 issue of "Update" (a newsletter to the neighbors of Kodak Park) it was noted that Dyson-Carter, then 92 years old, was probably the longest living resident of the Koda-Vista area. At the time she still resided in the home she and her husband built in the middle of an apple orchard (now 1396 Ridge Road W.) nearly 62 years earlier. Today that parcel of land is the home of Ray Kerhaert's new garage. According to Mary Ellen Carter-Cappon, her mother Nellie, passed away a year after she gave the interview for Kodak's issue of "Update" (1990). Carter-Cappon was a member of the first graduating class that attended the Willis N. Britton School from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Since the early 1800s and Sir John Lowther Johnstone as well as the Lay heirs, there have been many other notable landowners in the area. Those property owners included Mary J. Robinson, George Allen, Frederick Miller, Robert Dyson (Nellie's father), and Willis N. Britton. Of the landowners Dyson and Britton appear to be the most instrumental in helping develop the Koda-Vista neighborhood as well as the Town of Greece.

In an interesting twist of the area's history, Nellie Dyson-Carter recalled (in Jane Grant's book Changing Vista's) that her father sold 24 acres of his Koda-Vista holdings to a party who in turn sold the property to Homer, Charles and Bill Strong in approximately 1918. By the time Homer Strong married Margaret Woodbury (*note: prominent Rochesterian Margaret Woodbury Strong*) in 1920 he sold his portion of the property to his brothers as well as to Willis N. Britton.

The Britton name is very familiar in Greece, with Britton Road running from Lake Avenue to Mt. Read Blvd., and the old Britton Road School once at the corner of Britton Road and Dewey Avenue. It is interesting to note that even before Britton Road School existed, there was a Willis N. Britton School, which continues to stand 70 years later at 133 Hoover Drive.

Willis N. Britton was one of the largest peach growers and fresh fruit shippers in the Town of Greece during the first part of the 1900s. Later he became a well known land owner, businessman, and real estate developer. To his credit, Britton constructed many of our state roads and about 32 miles of streets in the City of Rochester. In fact, Avis Street which runs east and west off of Dewey Avenue just North of Ridgeway Avenue, was named after Britton's daughter Avis Britton-Miller. He also built more than 1,000 homes in our area. Many of these homes are located in the Rand/Steko neighborhood around Avis Street.

Upon the death of Greece Town Supervisor, Frank Vance, on February 14, 1903, Willis N. Britton was appointed Town Supervisor on February 25, 1903. He remained Town Supervisor until Frank Truesdale was elected and took office in 1904.

Britton, thought of as an inventor, and a business associate of George Eastman (according to Avis Britton-Miller), sold much of his property in the Koda-Vista area to Kodak. He had plans to lay out a road between Ridge Road and Driving Park as an alternate route from Greece to downtown Rochester. The road was to be named Brittonridge Boulevard. Kodak had other plans and Britton's dream never came to fruition. Instead, he laid out a street perpendicular to Ridge Road and named it for the 31st president of the United States, Herbert Hoover (Hoover Drive).

In 1928 Britton conveyed approximately five acres of his land (where Odyssey sits today) to the local school district with the understanding that a school would be built on that property. Jane Grant in her book Changing Vistas, that chronicles the history of the Koda-Vista neighborhood, states, "this land would belong to the district in perpetuity as long as it was used for educational purposes. A breach of the contract would cause the land to revert to the Britton estate. This is one of the reasons why Greece Central School District has not closed or sold Hoover Drive School."

In 1928 each of the Greece Common Schools held referendums and on July 1, 1928 the Greece Central School District # 1 came into being with the consolidation of Greece Common Schools # 3, 11, and 16. This was the first

Central School District in Monroe County and the 13th Central School District in New York State. Since there were no high schools in Greece at this time, the high school students continued to attend John Marshall and Hilton High Schools.

On July 9, 1928, voters approved the acceptance of the donation of five acres of land in the Koda-Vista tract, from Willis N. Britton. *It should be noted here that another property was also looked at for a school site. It was owned by Mrs. Clark. She was asking \$2,000 per acre and a minimum of five acres would be needed for the school. The Britton site was chosen because of not only cost but for its location. The Clark property was located south of Ridge Road and west of the Britton site, but the school would be located behind a local cemetery. It is my guess that the Clark property was located behind the cemetery at the corner of Ridge Road and Latona Road.* Voters also approved the raising of \$200,000 for the construction of the Willis N. Britton School (now Greece Odyssey). The original plan was to build a two story school. It was decided to extend the school to a third floor during its construction because it would be cheaper to make the addition during the original construction rather than later. Because of this decision, an additional \$25,000 was approved in order to build a larger school than originally planned.

When you look at the original building today, the visible concrete cornice towards the top of the building shows the originally designed height of the building. The third floor addition is just above that concrete cornice. Jane Grant feels that this real estate deal of Britton's was the one which had the greatest impact on the Koda-Vista neighborhood. Britton died in 1935 at the age of 74.

Architect Carl Ade designed the original 40,326 gross square foot Willis N. Britton School. The contractor A. Friederich and Sons began construction in 1928 and the cornerstone was laid. When the school was first built it was to have 18 classrooms. Ten classrooms were finished on the first two floors. The third floor had provision for eight classrooms, but was left unfinished when the building opened. According to Mrs. Prescott (Marge) Whitney, a teacher at the school in the early years, "there were empty rooms upstairs that they used for archery." In Changing Vistas, it states that when the school was first built, Koda-Vista neighbors thought that it was too large. In fact Mary Burke, of Allerton Street quoted neighbors as saying, "they'll never use the top floor of that school." Many years and several additions later the school continues to operate and is nearly filled to capacity.

When the school opened in September of 1929, Mary Burke's sister, Peg Guilfoyle-Lober, was one of the first seven faculty members at the new Willis N. Britton School. Guilfoyle-Lober remained a part of the faculty through 1961. Only two of the three floors were used at the time Guilfoyle-Lober began teaching at the school. There were 240 students enrolled in the school that first year, nine of whom were eighth graders. Grades kindergarten through eight were taught. At lunchtime mothers served hot meals to the students at a cost of \$0.25 per meal. Kenneth Jackson was the principal when the Willis N. Britton

School first opened.

There were two school busses when the school first opened in 1929. One is believed to be a Mack and the other a Stewart. Former students have memories of "the maroon" school bus. George Clark was the first bus driver.

Just prior to the opening of the new school, the two room brick schoolhouse (known as Greece District # 11 located at the NW corner of Mt. Read Blvd. and Ridge Rd.) closed its doors for the last time. The building was later demolished.

By looking at old photos and making comparisons, it appears that the original building was the portion from the current parking lot south, up to but not including what we know today as the COPE (counseling) Center. Although there were later additions to the back portion of the building in the area of the cafeteria. The "original building" is also the only portion of the building that has three floors.

The main door of the building was originally facing west on Hoover Drive, in the area where today the bus loop exits. This portion of the building was set back about half as far as it is today. The building was extended towards Hoover Drive to expand the gymnasium in approximately 1957. There is now only a small red door at the left end of that wall, as an exit from the gym.

The Greek style pillars are still noticeable on the original portion of the building. It is unknown if the west wall with the original main entrance was actually moved and the door area and name of the school filled in with brick, or if it was reconstructed to match the rest of the building after the gym was extended. Either way the original name of the school, Willis N. Britton, which was over the main entrance is no longer visible. The side door which faces north towards the parking lot is the only one with what appears be the original peak and urn above it along with words "every addition to the true knowledge is an addition to human power". From old photographs it appears that each side door had the same design with the peaks, the urn, and a quote. Another quote (found in an old photograph) from above one of the doors reads; "wisdom adorns riches and softens poverty"

The cornerstone bearing the date 1929 was once located at the NW corner of the building (to the left of the main doors). Upon closer inspection of the building no cornerstone can be found on the original building or anywhere else on the building. This leads me to believe that during the many additions and renovation projects within the last 70 years, that the cornerstone has been covered up or destroyed. Could there possibly be a time capsule somewhere within the building that we no longer have access to or was it removed and lost?

Once the new school was built, it became the center of the community. This is where many of the Koda-Vista Neighborhood Association meetings took place. In 1983 Jane Grant stated in her book that with the Willis N. Britton School was the center of the blossoming neighborhood, and that Avis Britton-Miller regretted that the building did not continue to bear the name of its benefactor, her father.

In the mid 1930s the Willis N. Britton School served as a public library for the community. Every six weeks the county library truck would drop off 50 books at the school library. The school would open for a few hours each evening so that adults could borrow books. *One should note that the Greece Public Library was not organized until the late 1950s and there was no actual library building until the early 1960s.*

The Willis N. Britton School began to come into its' own during the 1930s. It was during this decade that the school began to develop traditions that our students look forward to today. It was during this time that Milton V. Pullen became the school's second principal in 1936.

In 1937 the Willis N. Britton School Band was organized. It was also at this time that Greece Central began the Monroe County Music Festival. Also that year the school physical education teacher, John VanLuven started the first sports team, under the leadership of Ken Stenzel.

Violet Marshall Jackson (who attended the Willis N. Britton School from first grade - Sept. 1931 through 8th grade graduation in June 1938 - she moved ahead one grade between 6th and 7th grade) wrote, "The Argo the yearbook for 1938 was the first one and we made it ourselves. The camera club did the pictures and the pictures were pasted in by hand. It was all mimeographed."

In 1939 the school newspaper, "The Central News," was published monthly from October to May. The Zarnstorff family provided a copy of the June 1939 "yearbook" called The Argo. Printed on the cover are the words, "published by the scribes of Greece Central School at Rochester New York in the interests of it's graduates and the modern day Argonauts of Greece." *An interesting note is that in 1993 as Odyssey was developing, the students were given a choice for the school mascot of this new school. Three choices were given and an Argonaut was one of the choices. The snowleopard was chosen as Odyssey's mascot.*

Former student, Molly B. (Boland) Benjamin recalls the maroon Mack school bus with the pointy nose that she could ride to school even though she lived close enough to the school to walk. Benjamin reminisces, "I lived close enough to walk to school, but if I wanted to ride the bus, I could and if I wanted to ride around the whole route before being dropped off, I could do that too!" Benjamin also recalls the "wonderful feeling of belonging and friendliness that only a small town school in the late thirties could present."

Benjamin also tells us that each Arbor Day there was a grand ceremony in which the entire school gathered at the north end of the property, just south of the creek, to plant a tree. Today students and neighbors enjoy the shade of those trees that were planted in the late 30's and early 40's.

In 1939, 20 eighth graders graduated from the Willis N. Britton School. As the years went on the class sizes grew. In 1941 there were 32 eighth graders who graduated from the school.

In 1945 Bob Schellbery and E. W. Schlosser organized Cub Scout Pack 45, which met at the Hoover Drive school building. As of 1983 Cub Scout Pack 45 continued its traditions at Buckman Heights School (not far from its original meeting site on Hoover Drive).

The school yard on Hoover Drive was expanded by about four acres when the school district purchased this additional land from the Britton family in approximately 1948. *In comparison to other high schools Odyssey has a very small parcel of land. The land surrounding Barnard Elementary School is about seven acres, land surrounding the Professional Development Center and bus garage on Latta Road is about ten acres and the land surrounding Olympia High School is about 20 acres.* The Hoover Drive property is about 8 - 9 acres of land, of which only four acres were actually purchased by the school district, the other five acres were given to the school district by Willis N. Britton with specific stipulations on the use of the land.

Although the school district became centralized in 1928 with the consolidation of three of the town's common school districts, when first built the building on Hoover Drive was named after its benefactor Willis N. Britton. It is unclear when the school became known only as Greece Central School. It may be safe to assume that the name change occurred during one of the many additions to the building - more specifically during 1948 when the building was expanded from the double doors just passed rooms 107 and 108 (the south wall of the original building), farther south to the doors just before the science center (room 117). This "center" section of the building bears the name Greece Central School over what we know today as the school's main entrance off the bus loop.

At that time the design of that portion of the building was done by architects Waasdorp and Northrup, who designed some of the other schools within the district. This addition in 1948 gave the building 29,134 extra gross square feet including 14 additional classrooms.

The 1950s brought many changes to the Hoover Drive building known as Greece Central School. In 1952 the architects Waasdorp and Northrup designed another 18,273 gross square foot addition to the building. The addition began near room 117 and was built southward towards what we know today as the Industrial Arts section of the building. At this time the floor above was also added. Warren Foster, former Vice-Principal of the school, called this expansion the "flying bridge" section because the flights of stairs show how the addition was raised a half flight at the south end of the building making two second floors (approximately from rooms 219 to rooms 224 above, and rooms 119 to rooms 124 on the lower level, on the in between level are rooms 226, 228 and 228A). This was done because bedrock was hit during that expansion of the building.

Many current students know the huge boulder that sits next to the backstop of the softball field on the southeast end of the property. The boulder has a plaque bearing the name of Miss Francis Howell and the date 1953. Miss Howell, a physical education teacher at the school, was killed in an automobile

accident that year when she fell asleep at the wheel while driving home from a vacation in the hills of Pennsylvania. Staff and students had that plaque placed on the boulder there where she taught many of her classes.

During the early 50s there were three school districts in Greece. Greece Central School District # 1 was the Hoover Drive building and surrounding area. Greece Consolidated School District # 5 was in the Paddy Hill area (today's Professional Development Center on Latta Road at the end of Mt. Read Blvd.), and the Union Free District # 15 was Barnard School and surrounding area. On May 10, 1955 voters approved the annexation of the Union Free School district # 15, and the Consolidated School District # 5 by Greece Central School District # 1. This is when all the Greece schools came together under the heading of Greece Central School District. At that time the new central school district also acquired land for a future school (which is where Longridge School is today). It was also at that time that the building on Hoover Drive became known as Hoover Drive School, when schools were named after their street location. Marian Levinson was the curriculum co-ordinator on special one year appointment as Building Principal of Hoover Drive School during that time. Greece Central School District sent its incoming Freshmen to the high schools in the city of Rochester for the last time in 1955.

One June 12, 1956, a bond issue was passed to expand Paddy Hill School, West Ridge, Hoover Drive and Britton Road Schools. Hoover Drive was expanded to accommodate junior high classes. Again Waasdorp and Northrup worked on the design of the 3,670 gross square foot addition to the school. The cost of construction for this addition was \$164,000 while the cost of the original equipment for this addition was \$10,000.

A Times Union newspaper clipping from August 20, 1957 tells of the gym being enlarged for a cost of \$184,000. This might be the very same addition that was referred to in the previous paragraph.

During 1957 Hoover Drive housed students in grades K - 9. There were 319 9th graders out of the 1,341 total student population at the school. Harold Kimber was the building principal while Myron White was the secondary principal. The same Times Union article of August 1957 stated that Donald M. Haefele was appointed Vice-Principal of Hoover Drive School.

In 1958 Hoover Drive housed about 700 junior high students as well as 200 "walkers" in the elementary grades. During that year, ground was broken for the new Olympia High School by Hoover Drive 9th graders Judy McGrath and Craig Spross - who would be members of Olympia's first graduating class in 1961. While Olympia was under construction, Hoover Drive housed the 10th graders who would enter Olympia the following year as juniors (approximately 325 students).

When Olympia opened in September 1959 Hoover Drive again housed students in grades K - 8. Harold Kimber was the principal for grades K - 6, and Eugene Bowers was principal for grades 7 - 8. Donald Shannon was the building Vice-Principal.

Did you know that in 1959 Hoover Drive had a "Future Nurses of America" club?

The last year that Hoover Drive housed students in grades K - 8 was 1960. Eugene Bowers was the principal and Donald Shannon continued on as the Vice Principal.

In 1961 Hoover Drive became strictly a junior high for students in grades 7 - 9. The elementary students were divided up and sent to other elementary schools in the district. At this time Donald Haefele became principal.

During 1961 and 1962 architects were again brought in to renovate the school for its middle school population. Faragher and Macomber designed the 26,845 gross square foot renovation and addition. The "home ec." and industrial arts section of the building were added. The cafeteria was added to the back of the building and a new gym was added. The cost of this project in 1962 was \$199,268. The equipment cost was \$96,000. *It should be noted here that according to Dick Edgett, who attended the school in the 1940s, the student's cafeteria was in the area where the gym locker rooms are today. Edgett's pals reminisced that during lunches, ping pong tables were set up in the hallway in the lower level near today's locker rooms, for the students use after lunch.*

Notable events of the 60s include; 1964 - 9th graders went to the new senior high school and Hoover Drive became a 7 - 8 grade building. The school mascot at the time was the Hoover Hawk and the school colors were maroon and gold. Student William Minges (under the supervision of art teacher Mr. Hall) created a mural in the faculty dining room which had the staff feeling like they were in some far way South Sea Island. In 1965 twenty one 7th graders designed and painted a mosaic in the student cafeteria, under the direction of art teacher Mr. Hall. The artwork was called "Fulfillment Through Learning." The school's administration changed hands in 1966 when Sam DeSisti became principal and remained in that position through 1984. The school's 7th graders operated an Amateur Radio Station in 1966. Warren Foster became the Vice-Principal of Hoover Drive in 1968 and in 1969 the Board of Education named him acting Principal of Hoover Drive replacing Sam DeSisti while he recovered from a heart attack he had suffered.

As an interesting note to Odyssey's current students, current Odyssey teacher Mrs. Virginia Witt taught Language Arts at Hoover Drive during the 1968-'69 school year.

During the 1970s the nearly 50 year old school fell on some hard times and was the center of controversy during much of that decade. Problems began when Hoover Drive was neglected because of school budgetary problems. Newer schools always seemed to have top priority. According to the January 1972 Greece Press, there was talk of closing the school, using it as a storage facility, using it for adult education, or for students who attended BOCES special education classes. The Times Union January 19, 1972 edition stated that 4th ward councilman, George Tobin suggested that if the Hoover Drive building should be closed that it could be used as a satellite branch of MCC.

School district officials soon learned of the legal problems they would face, if the school were to be closed. Although the school district paid to build the school and its many additions, if the school were to be closed the building and the five acres surrounding it would revert back to the Britton estate, as per the agreement made by Willis N. Britton in 1928. The district soon realized that it would be in its' best interests to keep the school open.

In 1974 the Koda-Vista Community Association prepared a study of the school which urged the school board to make renovations to the building rather than to close it as a classroom facility. The school board agreed. In the late 1970s contractors and architects returned to the building, not to put on a new addition but to make the necessary repairs. Old windows were replaced with more energy efficient windows, new energy efficient boilers were installed and a new energy saving roof was put on the building. Restrooms were remodeled and new ones added, the new nurse's office was completed, and the Vice-Principal's office and conference rooms were remodeled. The library was enlarged, the main foyer was remodeled and the interior of the building was given a "face-lift". The cost of the project was approximately \$600,000.

The 1970s were not all doom and gloom. In June of 1976 the Hoover Drive students and faculty, under the direction of teacher William Remley, celebrated our country's bicentennial. During the two day event students enjoyed Olympic style field day events. One evening the public was invited to visit school displays where each class represented an event in American History. Teachers were dressed in period clothing for the occasion. The celebration ended with a bicentennial costume ball. Under the direction of senior teacher aide, MaryAnn Subrani, 125 students from 24 homerooms put together a quilt depicting the history of the Town of Greece.

The decade ended with another gala celebration, the school's 50th anniversary. A few of the honored guests included Elise Carlson Boyd, MaryEllen (Carter) Cappon, Marion Schackelford, Arline Simmons, and Adeline Riebel Whyte all members of the first graduating class; Lois Brayer former kindergarten teacher; Kenneth Britton whose grandfather donated the land to the school district; Alta Janes Ekwell member of the 1st student body and a well known dance instructor who in later years taught dance to many former Hoover Drive students and their children; and George Tripp former principal. The afternoon included many fun events for the students with the official anniversary ceremonies beginning at 3:00pm with guest speakers, followed by a band concert. The event concluded with an ice cream social. At the time of the 50th anniversary the school had 46 teachers and 733 students in grades seven and eight.

The decade of the 80s brought new challenges and also new worries to the Hoover Drive School. Being in the shadow of Eastman Kodak for over 50 years brought many questions and health concerns in the open during the late 1980s.

Daniel Doran became the eighth principal of Hoover Drive in 1985.

According to the June 1989 issue of "Update" (a newsletter to our neighbors near Kodak Park) Vice Principal, Warren Foster spent his entire 33 year career at Hoover Drive School with 21 of those years spent as VP. The article states: "His (Foster's) long tenure at the school and his knowledge of its' development has earned him the title of the school's 'resident historian,' according to Greece school officials."

In March of 1988 voters decided the fate of Hoover Drive School. If a \$30.6 million bond issue was passed, two new middle schools would be built, one of which would replace the 59 year old school.

Hoover Drive survived the bond issue vote, but other problems loomed ahead. In July of 1988 school grounds were tested to determine whether chemicals from Kodak Park had seeped into the soil of neighboring areas. Air samples were also taken from various classrooms. As of September 3, 1988 no toxins were found in or around the school, and the building was able to get over another hurdle. Positive findings on any of the tests would have closed the school and forced administrators to find a creative way to educate the 750 students according to board president Robert Mueller. There still wasn't smooth sailing in sight for the Hoover Drive building.

As the school opened in 1988 many parents said that the Hoover Drive facility had been neglected over the years and was in disrepair. Principal Dan Doran agreed that the library could use a new rug, acoustic tiles in the auditorium, and some new lighting and floor tiles here and there; but basically the school was up to par. Foreign language teacher, Celia Serotsky put it very positively stating, "It's the people inside the building, teachers and students, teachers and administrators - that is very positive. In my mind, newness doesn't mean better." *Serotsky is still teaching Spanish and French at Odyssey as we celebrate the school's 70th anniversary.*

Being a neighbor of Kodak Park is risky business and that proved to be true on Sept. 7, 1989 when students at Buckman Heights Elementary School and Hoover Drive Middle School never made it to the first day of classes due to a chemical spill at Kodak Park.

On a lighter note, in October of 1989 twenty 8th grade girls at Hoover Drive worked at the Games for the Physically Challenged in Brockport. The girls served as "athlete buddies"

With another space crunch looming in the near future and a defeated school budget, Hoover Drive's fate once again hung in the balance. In the early 1990s the Greece community was told of an urgent need for increased high school classroom space for the very near future. The district currently had three high schools and three feeder middle schools. Arcadia Middle would feed into Arcadia High, Athena Middle would feed into Athena High, and the newest middle school (the former Cardinal Mooney High School) Apollo would feed into Olympia High. Where would this leave the Hoover Drive School, which mainly feed into Olympia High? Hoover was too small a facility to house a high school program similar to the other high schools in Greece.

A committee of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members formed to develop a creative way to incorporate Hoover into an expansion plan in a way that would make it appealing to staff, students, and parents. One has to remember that this small school which could house about 750 students, had a very small athletic field, as well as no pool yet it would be in competition with other high schools that had pools, large gyms, and many other modern advantages. The idea for a school of choice with a different approach to education quickly became popular among staff and parents in the district.

The Hoover Drive 6-12 Core Team designed a 6-9 grade school allowing time to develop the 10-12 grade program as the 9th grade students moved up. The new Hoover Drive 6-12, tentatively named Odyssey Community School, would be a school which would lead Greece into the 21st century. The school had an integrated curriculum designed to build links between different subjects, "exploratory" courses where students could investigate their interests, and block scheduling which made each class about 90 minutes. Special Education students would be blended in with the general ed. population with extra staff support (a step many Greece schools didn't take until 1999). *As a side note, Odyssey was the first Greece middle and/or high school to use a block scheduling format for its' day. It wasn't until the late 1990s that other Greece high schools began to investigate the benefits of block scheduling, and began to experiment and incorporate that type of scheduling into their own days.*

Staff, students, and parents were excited about this new kind of school in Greece. As of July 1993 about 400 students were enrolled at Odyssey Community School, 54 other students were on waiting lists. Thirty staff members transferred to the school or were hired, and the PTSA had formed. Two months before the opening of school, the newly elected school board was considering closing the Hoover Drive School as well as the newly constructed PineBrook School because enrollment was down from what was originally projected and Greece had too many classrooms.

Whether the board succumbed to community pressure or whether they listened to the voice of reason, the Odyssey School at Hoover Drive opened its' doors for 430 students in grades 6 - 9 on September 8, 1993. At the opening day ceremony a red maple was planted in front of the school near the technology wing and principal Ron Nigro told the students, "like this young tree, Odyssey is a young school. The tree as well as the school and its' students will grow together."

In 1997 about 75 seniors walked across the stage at Theatre on the Ridge to receive their diplomas from Odyssey principal, Ron Nigro. This was Odyssey's first graduating class.

In June of 2000 Odyssey will have another first graduating class. The Odyssey graduates of 2000 will be the very first students who entered the new middle/high school of choice as 6th graders in 1993. With their parents and teachers these students believed in the new ideas in education that Odyssey offered, they hung on when things got tough and they shaped Odyssey into the

school it is today.

The 70th anniversary of the school was celebrated on Thursday, October 7th with an open house for students (past and present), staff (past and present), families, and the public. The Odyssey PTSA sponsored an old fashioned ice cream social. Seven decades of memorabilia were displayed throughout the building and 70 years of stories of the Hoover Drive building were shared. Some of the well known information of the building additions can be found in district archives. Other memories were memories that are not written on paper but on the heart...of friendships, spring walks, assemblies, and plays.

Currently there are about 725 students enrolled at Odyssey in grades 6 through 12. The staff numbers close to 80. School administration includes Ronald Nigro - principal, Donna Schalge - vice principal as well as former Hoover Drive student, and Ty Zinkewich - vice principal.

Although the school's population is smaller than most middle schools or high schools, it still has many of the same activities. Musical groups include; select choir, middle school chorus, jazz choir, senior high mixed choir, junior high concert band and jazz band, senior high jazz band, senior high symphonic band, as well as both middle school and high school orchestra. Odyssey does not have its' own football team like other high schools, but its' sports program includes men's baseball, women's softball, modified track and field, golf, tennis, soccer, men's and women's basketball, volleyball, and cheerleading. A variety of clubs and organizations fill the student's extra-curricular hours.

The school mascot is the Snowleopard. The school colors are Purple and Teal. It has no alma mater, but it does have the motto "believe-achieve" Odyssey's motto now written for future generations embodies the spirit that has filled the school for the past 70 years. It has been this spirit and the zeal for education from those within that has brought the school through its' darkest hours.

The Willis N. Britton School once the shining star of Greece Central School District # 1 worn and weathered over the decades has once again appeared on the educational horizon of the Greece Central School District as Odyssey, the shining star of the district which will lead its' students proudly into the next millennium. Though the building is worn, tradition and history are embedded within this school. More importantly it has been, it is and always will be the spirit and enthusiasm of the administrators, staff, students, and parents of this school on Hoover Drive (no matter what the name) that has made and will continue to make this school great. It has left a lasting impression on many a student and Greece resident.

Happy 70th anniversary and may your "Odyssey" continue for many more years!

Marianne B. Himmelsbach
September 1999

SCHOOL ALMA MATER

(Tune: "Far Above Cayuga's Waters")

By the old historic Ridge Road
Stands our district's pride
Dearer to our sons and daughters
Than all else beside.

Chorus:

Greece Central, Greece Central
May your pupils be
Loyal to the truths you've taught us
Ever true to thee.

Here we'll work and play together
Many a happy year.
Others then take up the chorus
Which we love to hear.

When we far from thee have wandered
Still our thought shall be
Of our happy hours together
Central School, in thee.

(from approximately 1930's)

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Memorabilia and/or conversations from/with:

Debra Bellinger

Molly B. (Boland) Benjamin

Richard Edgett

Pam Field

Joyce Gleason

Violet Marshall-Jackson

Mary Jane Lane

Mary Ellen (Carter) Cappon-Thomson

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stories, memories, and memorabilia in order to revive the history of the school at
133 Hoover Drive.

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