William F. Spencer, District Superintendent

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March 3, 1959

Professor Harry Walts, Supervising Principal, Middleburgh Central School, Middleburgh, New York,

Dear Professor Walts,

Fifteen years ago, your predecessor, Dr. Stewart H. Smith, asked me to write an introduction to the tenth anniversary handbook of Middleburgh Central School, which was then being published. The committee in charge of the quarter-century celebration of the establishment of our Central School has again made the same request. On behalf of the former Board of Education members, I express congratulations through you to our district for a quarter century of accomplishment and also on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the old Middleburgh Grade and High School which it replaced. I attended this old School for a number of years, and was President of the Board of Education of its Union Free School District when the first official step was taken to centralize. The progress of the school has been close to my heart these many years.

The Central School very definitely broadened the educational opportunities of many girls and boys. It has been a principal factor in uniting our entire area into one common educational and social community. Its physical plant is in keeping with the times. We should not be content with having thus made advanced education available to greater numbers. Greater emphasis must be on scholarship. As was pointed out recently by former President Herbert Hoover, we must strive to raise scholastic standards. Our aim henceforth must not only be more graduates, but better graduates.

Finally, we are proud of the many fine girls and boys who have been educated here, and who are making their marks in life today. To the school, and you personally, I wish every success in the years to come.

Sincerely yours,

F. Walter Bliss

OUR MIDDLEBURGH SCHOOL - HOW IT GREW

(Miss Dorothea Bartholomew – Town Historian)

The Schoharie Valley is a section rich in history and legend, but about our earliest schools we know very little. The Palatines who settled here are sometimes referred to as "poor and ignorant." Surely they deserve the justice of being judged, not by the standards of our day, but by those of their time and place. It is certain that John Conrad Weiser and his neighbors who settled Weiser's Dorf in the winter of 1712-13 had been led by a dream of finding a home where their children and their children's children might dwell in peace and enjoy the fruits of their labor. It is not too much to believe that the right to be educated, which in Europe was the privilege of the few, was among the ideals for which they endured so much.

All Palatine settlements seem to follow about the same general pattern. In the first two or three years after a permanent location had been selected and shelters provided for their families a log building was rolled up that was to be devoted to church and school purposes. When a resident clergyman was secured he often served as both pastor and teacher. Pastor Nicholas Sommers arrived in 1742 to set up his headquarters in Schoharie and serve Lutheran congregations in the Hudson, Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys. In 1743 he recorded in his journal that he had "that day visited the home of Frederick Bauck in Brechebin to arrange for the instruction of the young."

The early church-school buildings appear to have been much the same. They were small, square, log structures with an aperture in the roof for the escape of smoke from a charcoal heating pit in the center of a ground floor. Since iron was almost unknown in the Valley until shortly before the Revolution and glass not used in frontier communities, Simm's statements must be accepted that school was held in a "log dwelling" and "these structures would have a doorway but no door and a small opening cut in the wall would serve as a window." Before the Revolution these first structures, both home and church, had been replaced with more permanent and comfortable buildings. These we can judge from a few examples still standing, but of their schools there are no records or remains.

One important fact that must be recognized is that there were educated men among the Palatines who would most certainly encourage the education of the young. Judge John Brown writing the story of the settlers at the request of DeWitt Clinton might say of his grandfather, Matthew Junck, "He was the first to teach school among the Palatines in America. He was a perfect good reader and singer in German, Low Dutch and English, but a very poor writer and knew no arithmetic at all." But Conrad Weiser, II, who must have been his pupil, years later was corresponding with Ben Franklin and the governor of Pennsylvania.

These attempts at education were halted by the Revolution. Because of the destruction of the Brant-Johnson Raid of October 17, 1780, the years following had to be devoted to the slow and painful task of rebuilding.

In 1812 the first public school law in the state was passed. This law permitted people, if they so wished, to form a school district, elect three trustees, hire a teacher and collect taxes to help pay the cost. The state promised to pay part of the expenses, but since taxes and state aid would not cover all costs, the remainder was to be paid by parents according to the number of

children they had in school and the attendance of these children. The rule governing the size of the district and the location of the schoolhouse was that no child should have to walk much farther than a mile to reach the schoolhouse from his home.

Under this law three separate one-room schools each providing instruction for whatever children attended were built in Middleburgh village. The Riverside school was constructed opposite the Dutch Reformed Church and about a quarter of a mile from the site of the Middle Fort. The Bull's Head district was organized and a schoolhouse built at the corner of upper Main Street and the Huntersland Road. This served a section where Jonathan Danforth, builder of the Loonenburgh Turnpike, and his numerous family had built homes. This building and the drover's tavern whose sign gave that section of the village, including the school its name, is still standing. These two communities were divided by what now is the business section of Main Street. At that time it was a swamp, and a "common" for pasturing cattle was near the site of our present school building. A third school district was formed in the Clauverwie section near the location of the original Palatine settlement.

About the same time other district schools were organized in the Town of Middleburgh and the other towns which form the present centralized district. The records of School District 10, Town of Middleburgh, which was the Huntersland school, have been carefully preserved. This district was formed December 31, 1813, by the "freeholders and inhabitants libel to pay taxes" at a special meeting held at the inn of Leighton Joice. Three trustees were chosen and the sum of \$100 voted to build a schoolhouse "on the old site." In March thirty dollars additional funds were voted and the building seems to have been put in use in 1814 or '15. In 1816 the trustee reported to the annual meeting that 72 children between the ages of 5 and 15 had received instruction. The first amount of public money received was twenty-nine dollars and nine cents in 1817.

The school year in these schools was divided into a winter term, when the older children could attend, which was taught by a man; and a summer term, especially for younger children, taught by a woman. Parents should contribute "1/4 cord good hard wood" – "cut fit for the stove" – "for each child signed or sent." Those who neglected were to be fined 12 shilling per cord. Also among the early minutes is their resolution "the teacher to board with those of the district who will furnish board gratuitously."

Among the problems that concerned the voters at the annual meetings were, securing a "qualified" teacher, choosing district officials, repairing the building, and purchasing additional equipment. This latter included such items as \$1.50 to purchase a chair, pail, cup and iron basin for the benefit of the district or to buy 50 volumes with which to start a community library. In 1844 five dollars was voted for a globe and maps and at another date it was decided to buy a dictionary.

During the age of the little red schoolhouse, most of them in this district were white; a wave of "Seminary Fever" struck the county. The two schools for higher learning established in Middleburgh in this period were both of the academy or day-school type, rather than the boarding schools which were quite common. Wainwright Institute which was also St. Paul's Episcopalian Church, was finished in 1855. A subscription for the building of the church was raised by general contributions on the understanding that it would also be used for school purposes. Although the school was under the auspices of the Diocese which contributed \$500

towards construction, it was understood that religious instruction, if any, was to be non-sectarian. Service books and communion plate were donated in memory of Bishop Wainwright by his family. Mr. Proctor, the first minister, taught the school as did several of those who followed him. This school ceased to function about 1882. The building which is now used as a Catholic Church is one of the very few of these select schools still standing.

The Charlouise Institute or "French School" as it was popularly called stood on the corner of Railroad and Sheldon Avenue. It is the building now in use as an apartment house. This school was opened by Jean Isadore Charlouise as a private enterprise and furnished excellent instructions in languages and the classics. It operated from 1878 until 1881, when it closed because of financial difficulties.

In 1853 the State Legislature enacted a law permitting school districts to combine and set up free public high schools. By 1870 the numbers of schools of both types were about even. After that date the select schools were rapidly replaced or converted into public schools.

Accordingly, on January 17, 1883, the voters of the three districts of Middleburgh village held a meeting with George L. Danforth as chairman. The resolution to consolidate was carried by a vote of 218 to 33. The district was to be known as "Union Free School District Number 1 of the Town of Middleburgh." Three trustees, William H. Albro, Montraville Guernsey and Harmon A. Vroman were elected trustees. Mr. Guernsey died within a year and Mr. Lewis Fop was selected to fill the vacancy. The board purchased a two-acre plot on Main Street of Dr. Henry Wells and Bartholomew Becker for \$3000. The building was a three-story brick structure surmounted by a cupola. The first and second floors were each equally divided by a wide hall from the front to the rear entrance with two rooms on each side. The grades were accommodated on the first floor and the high school occupied the second. The top floor consisted of one large room used as a public hall. Cost of the building was about \$17,000; furniture, \$1000; library and "philosophical apparatus," about another \$1000, and two furnaces for heating, \$2000.

The site of this Union Free School was a historic one. It was near that spot the Palatine settlement had been founded along the little stream called by them the "Cup and Killecha." About 1750, a stone house was built on this plot by Lieutenant Colonel Zielie, who served the Albany County Militia during the Revolution. The wooden part of this house burned when the village was raided, but it was rebuilt and stood until torn down to make way for the new school in 1883.

The Academic Department was organized under the Board of Regents. The school included all subjects of common school and high school grades arranged so as to prepare pupils for college or other institutions of high learning. The school boasted a library of 1,000 volumes. The school catalogue stated, "a valuable portion of a pupil's education comes from the books which he reads."

"The aim of the institution is not to cram the pupil's mind with facts but to give a clear concept of principles and develop power and range of thought." Non-resident pupils in 1896-7 were charged tuition as follows: primary, \$12 per year; intermediate and grammar grade, \$18 per year; academic, \$21 per year. That year enrollment was 323 of which 71 were in the Academic Department. The faculty numbered seven. The first gradating class in 1886 had only one member, William H. Stewart. This building was used for exactly 50 years, and 360 pupils graduated from it.

In 1900 Mr. Silas Kimm, principal, organized a one-year Training Class for preparation for teachers. This class was held in the library of the school. Those who completed the course were granted a certificate valid as long as the holder wished to teach. The school faculty gave the instruction and training class students observed the teaching in various grades. Qualifications for entrance were either a "Third Grade Teachers Certificate," which was renewable permit granted by the district superintendent, or a Regents Preliminary Certificate with 14 additional academic counts. Pupils lacking one or two of the required subjects could attend a four weeks Summer School where they received special preparation. Because of his later activities, Mr. Kimm has been called the father of the Centralized School system in New York State.

Many changes take place in a fifty-year span. In the early 1930's there was again a need to organize rural schools. The people of Middleburgh began considering the problem of bringing various districts together in a centralized system which would make it easier for children from farm areas and nearby hamlets to attend high school. During 1930 the Board of Education: Marcus B. Rickard, president; F. Walter Bliss, and Caryl Bulson, acting on plans made by District Superintendent, Luman R. Bowdish, appointed a committee to canvass opinions of residents in neighboring districts. The committee appointed included Roger Cornell, A. E. Requa, Thomas Bush. Dr. Josiah Mann and Everett Vroman. On April 3, 1931, the vote to centralize was carried. The new district included the village of Middleburgh and majority of one-room schools in the Towns of Middleburgh, Fulton and Broome, together with one in Blenheim and one in Berne. Prior to the vote on centralization, Mr. Bliss resigned from the Board and was succeeded by James West.

A second meeting was held in October when it was decided to buy 13 acres of land adjacent to the school ground. This land included part of the "Paper Mill" property, where in 1853 Lewis Fop had started a mill which made paper from rye straw. This has provided a parking space, play ground, athletic field and site for a 13-bus garage without purchase of additional space.

The vote to bond the district and erect a new school was carried on December $15^{\rm th}$ of the same year.

Mr. Ralph Pyle was principal at the time of centralization, and many of his own ideas were incorporated in the building plans. The Board of Education for the new district included: Caryl W. Bulson, president; Elmer Wood, Charles C. Dutton, Clark Spickerman and LeGrand Shaul. J. Laurence White was clerk, and Clayton Weller was treasurer. In July of that year Mr. Bowdish retired as District Superintendent and Mr. William F. Spencer was appointed.

Bonds were issued to the sum of \$403,000 to purchase the land and erect the building. Mr. A. F. Gilbert was chosen as architect. Due to the economic conditions of the early 30's the State Education Department did not approve the plan for separate auditorium and gymnasium. The village at that time, however, lacked a suitable place for public gatherings and entertainments which an auditorium would supply. A retired teacher, Miss Alice Requa, Mr. Frank Kniffen, and other public minded citizens adopted the cause and campaigned for such a meeting place to be built without state aid if necessary. After this plan was proposed, the state reconsidered and approved the original plans.

School opened in Middleburgh in September, 1932, under unusual conditions. Many of the one-room schools were in need of costly repairs and had voted to close. A fleet of buses

provided transportation for the children of these districts and those above 6th grade in all districts of the centralization to attend the village school. The 647 who enrolled could not be accommodated in the old building, so the first four grades were located in temporary quarters about the town. Work on the school grounds continued through the winter. It was found necessary to drive piles in order to make a firm foundation for the structure. Actual construction began in the spring and by September, 1933, class moved into the new building. The final step was to tear down the old high school and build the auditorium. On Friday, April 6, 1934, the formal dedication of the Middleburgh Central Rural School was held with Dr. Ray Snyder, director of the Rural Education Division of the State Education Department giving the address.

At the dedication Dr. Snyder pointed out the advantages which centralization gave to rural areas. Mr. Gilbert stated that "the building stands completed at less cost per cubic foot than any structure in my experience." This was also the first appearance of the instrumental music department. The first orchestra and band were directed by V. W. Baker.

In this first year of its operation the district received \$64,147 in public money. Thirty-three teachers were employed with twenty of those in the Middleburgh building and thirteen in one-room schools which were still operating. The closing of the West Fulton school in 1957 brought to an end the last of the one-room schools of the original centralization. Preston Hollow, which joined the district in 1952, is still operating for grades one-four.

Under succeeding principals, Dr. Stewart H. Smith, 1934-1945, and Mr. Harry L. Walts, many additional services have been adopted. In 1935 the department of agriculture and homemaking were opened and a teacher of physical education was employed. Industrial art was introduced in 1937. The Board of Regents granted a six year high school rating in 1938. That was also the year that the bus garage was built to house thirteen buses. A well equipped work-repair shop under a capable mechanic has made possible a successful bus-maintenance program. In 1939 an elementary vocal music department and an opportunity class were added. Guidance was introduced first as a service shared with other schools of Mr. Spencer's supervisory district and later, as pupil enrollment increased, as a full-time position. Driver Education was added in 1949. In 1949 a full-time dental hygienist joined the staff. Also in 1949-50 a girls' physical education instructor was employed. The Commercial Department has been enlarged with the employment of a second teacher. In 1956 a full-time remedial reading teacher began work with pupils grades two through seven.

Certain events in the history of the school deserve to be remembered. These include community services, athletic and scholastic honors which have been earned by individual or team effort under faculty sponsorship.

One of the many community services has been the Community Night School which was organized in October, 1949. Three hundred adults signed up for instruction that first year with driver education the most popular course. Through the years shop, "agg," farm machinery repair, ceramics and religion and life have been very popular courses.

In 1947 Middleburgh and Cobleskill Schools were the scene of a movie, "The School in Action," made by the University of Wisconsin. The purpose was to provide information on central schools which were just being proposed in that state.

In September, 1948, a group of ten German public school educators who were brought to the United States by the Rockefeller Foundation for a ten-week period to observe outstanding

school systems, spent a day at Middleburgh which was one of the rural schools selected by the Education Department.

In 1948 Middleburgh and Schoharie were co-hosts to the State F.F.A. convention. This was the first time such a project was undertaken in a community of this size. Five hundred thirty boys were registered for the meetings which were held on May 6, 7 and 8. The local F.F.A. which was chartered in 1936 also has made its Father-Son banquet an annual spring event. Nine students have received the Empire Farmer award at state conventions, and two have earned the American Farmer Award. In 1956-57 the local chapter won a Bronze Award in the Nation Chapter Contest.

The Music Department of M.C.S. deserves a history by itself. In 1942 the High School Choir earned the privilege of participating in the National Choir Contest held in Jersey City. The trip was made possible by community contributions. In 1944 M.C.S. was first represented in the Margaret and Joseph Stehr and Florence Morrison were the State Sectional Program. representatives of the school and had the privilege of hearing the National Symphony Orchestra. Since that date the department has been active in both sectional and general All State Festivals. It has also been active in County Festivals which were started twenty-two years ago. The Christmas program and the Spring Concert have become traditional. The department also furnishes music for both grade and high school graduation. The Easter Program presented by the choir also contributes to the community. Through the years the instrumental and vocal groups have cooperated with each other to present outstanding programs. The department is always on call for special assemblies or community affairs especially those put on by service organizations. The band has accompanied the local Fire Department in its marching program, and appeared at the Cobleskill Fair on its Children's Day programs. The Music Department is associated with the New York State School Music Association in its Contest-Festival Program. In 1949 the band made its first appearance in new uniforms. The fund for these uniforms had been started and largely raised by the local "Barbershoppers." At this time they won their fourth consecutive "one" rating.

The year 1949-50 found the facilities of the local school very crowded. The student body numbered 820 and the faculty 42. A survey showed that each year the enrollment would increase due to more children entering first grade. The February meeting of the School and Community Association was devoted to a discussion of the proposed addition. Mr. A. F. Gilbert, architect of the original building was present to help review the plans. The Board of Education also held weekly meetings at which residents of the district might ask questions or make suggestions. Three projects were adopted; an addition to the center wing which would contain a cafeteria and kitchen on the ground floor level, six new classrooms and two science laboratories, an addition to the gymnasium and a new music room. The estimated cost of this was to total \$325,000. State aid would cover approximately 70 per cent of construction costs. This proposal which required a two-thirds majority was carried on March 11, 1950. The Korean Crisis increased building costs at the rate of 15 cents per square foot. On March 10, 1951, the voters approved an additional \$160,000. At the time the addition was begun the school which was planned to accommodate 700 pupils had a registration of 868 and for a second time temporary quarters around the village were in use, this time in the Methodist and Lutheran Churches.

Orderly disorder again ruled on the school grounds as contracts were awarded and once more a pile-driver went to work.

Opening of school in the fall of 1952 was delayed as final details of the building neared completion. When it opened on September 3, 1,004 pupils reported including 57 who were members of the first kindergarten at M.C.S.

The Board of Education at the time of the second building program was Henry Pindar, Caryl Bulson, Leonard Wood, Max Shaul and Thomas Bush.

1952-53 was a year of celebrations. The local F.F.A. boys did well at both State and County Fairs. In November the sectional All-State Festival was held here with a band of 102, a choir of 157, and an orchestra of 80 talented young musicians participating under such directors as Dr. Joseph Saetvut, State Music Supervisor, and Dr. Irving Cheyette of Syracuse University. That year the Middleburgh Basketball Team became county champions for the first time and followed this up by winning in the sectionals until defeated by Corinth in the final game. The Yorker Club, formed two years before, attended their first state convention at Saratoga. M.C.S. Seniors took five of the ten scholarships granted Schoharie County at that time. Also that year the largest class in the history of the school was graduated and Moving Up Day became a part of the annual commencement exercises.

The school records show that since 1946 M.C.S. seniors have won thirty-four State University Scholarships. Four of these were also recipients of the Cornell scholarship and two nursing scholarships have been awarded. Other students have received scholarships from fraternal orders and from colleges in which they registered.

December 7, 1956, the local chapter of the National Honor Society was started by the formal induction of eleven seniors. Other members have been accepted bringing the total number of local members to thirty-one.

M.C.S. buses now cover 580 miles per day to bring children from outlying districts to the central school. Thirty-six years ago the village school had 250 pupils enrolled. Fifteen years ago the centralized school had 645 pupils. The years bring many changes besides the increased registration. The next chapters in our history will be written by the children already enrolled in our school as each generation will "Keep fair her shield of snowy white, Keep fair her field of green."

The Handbook Committee is grateful to Miss Flora King for her permission to use material collected for the Tenth Anniversary Handbook.

PRINCIPALS OF MIDDLEBURGH HIGH SCHOOL

John Kelly	_1883 - 1884
*Roland Keyser	_ 1884 - 1893
H. H. Snell	_ 1893 - 1895
William M. Marvin	_ 1895 - 1897
Edwin F. Norton	_ 1897 - 1899
Silas C. Kimm	_ 1899 - 1904
**John C. Chase	_ 1904 - 1908
Ralph Armitage	_ 1908 - 1909
Milo Brown	_ 1909 - 1910
Addison L. Hill	_ 1910 - 1911
Arville Cone	_ 1911 - 1912
David B. Lockner	_ 1912 - 1914
J. Harvey Leneker	_ 1914 - 1918
Neil Quackenbush	_ 1918 - 1921
Karl Rex	_ 1921 - 1922
Vernon F. Morrison	1922 - 1928
Ralph F. Pyle	_ 1928 - 1934
Stewart H. Smith	_ 1934 - 1945
Harry L. Walts	1945 – 19

^{*}Left during school year for Ed. Dept., consultant in English and Greek

^{**}Left in spring for Milne High School, Albany.

DISTRICTS INCLUDED AT TIME OF CENTRALIZATION

1 Middleburgh No. 1	Union Free School	
1 - Middleburgh No. 1 2 - Middleburgh No. 2	Acker Hollow	
3 - Middleburgh No. 3	Brooky Hollow	
4 - Middleburgh No. 4		
5 - Middleburgh No. 5		
6 - Middleburgh No. 6		
7 - Middleburgh No. 7	West Middleburgh	
8 - Middleburgh No. 9		
9 - Middleburgh No. 10		
10 - Middleburgh No. 11		
11 - Fulton No. 1	West Fulton	
12 - Fulton No. 2	Fultonham	
13 - Fulton No. 3	Swart District	
14 - Fulton No. 4	Breakabeen	
15 - Fulton No. 5		
16 - Fulton No. 7		
17 - Fulton No. 8	Fairland	
18 - Fulton No. 10	Pleasant Valley	
19 - Fulton No. 11	Husons Corners	
20 - Fulton No. 15	Vroomansland	
21 - Broome No. 1	Hawversville	
22 - Broome No. 2	Dutton Ridge	
23 - Broome No. 5	Pine Grove	
24 - Broome No. 7	<u>Franklinton</u>	
25 - Broome No. 9	Mace Hill	
26 - Broome No. 10	Livingstonville	
27 - Broome No. 11	Windy Ridge	
28 - Blenheim No. 4	Bouck's Falls	
29 - Berne No. 16	Garvey Hill	
DISTRICTS ADDED SINCE CENTRALIZATION		
30 - 1939 - Fulton No 6	Rossman Hill	
31 - 1939 - Fulton No. 12	Hamm District	
32 - 1939 - Fulton No. 14	Dibble Hollow	
33 - 1939 - Broome No. 3	Gates Hill	
34 - 1941 - Berne No. 20	Cook Hill	
35 - 1942 - Broome No. 6	Cook Hill	
36 - 1943 - Broome No. 14	Pucker Street	
37 - 1943 - Broome No. 8		
38 - 1952 - Rensselaer No. 14		
39 - 1954 - Rensselaer No. 14	Roney District	

A COMPARISON OF CURRICULUMS

1886

Civics and Economics
History
Languages
German
Greek
French
Latin
Literature
Mathematics
Rhetric
Science

The school year consisted of 3 terms. A Freshman in the CLASSICAL SCIENTIFIC COURSE would take the following subjects:

1st Term Algebra Latin I Greek History Physical Geography

2nd Term Algebra Latin I Roman History English Composition

> 3rd Term Algebra Latin I Botany N.Y. History

A COMPARISON OF CURRICULUMS

1959

*Agriculture *Band *Business Education Busness Law, Business Math, Shorthand, Bookkeeping, Typewriting *Choir Citizenship Education **Driver Education** *Fine Arts Health *Homemaking *Industrial Arts Languages French Latin Spanish Literature Mathematics *Mechanical Drawing **Physical Education** Remedial Reading Science

The school years consist of two terms. A COLLEGE ENTRANCE Student takes the following in his Freshman year:

Citizenship Education
English
General Science
Algebra
French, Latin or Spanish I
Plus one elective*

A Guidance Department offers the following services to students:

Counseling, Testing, Information (College and Industry), Placement, and Interpretation of Cumulative Data.

There are sixteen pages listing the graduates from 1886 to 1958 and the Senior Class 1959 in the Anniversary Book.

ALMA MATER

Words and Music by Frank B. Rickard

On the banks of a lovely river, By the side of a quiet stream Stands our dear old Alma Mater Our School of White and Green.

In the fairest valley fashioned By the hand of God unseen, Stands our dear old Alma Mater, Our School of White and Green.

In the days that lie before us In the silent years between, May we love her as we do to-night, Our School of White and Green.

Chorus:

Then join we all in singing And may this be our theme, Keep bright her shield of Snowy White, Keep fair her field of Green.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The anniversary committee of the School and Community Association wishes to take this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation to everyone who has contributed in any way to the success of this program. To thank each one individually would be almost impossible, since so many have helped.

ARLINGTON VANDYKE,

Committee Chairman.