

# The Slate

Vol XXIV , Issue I

Spring 2018



*The Hicks school as it appeared in its original location at the corner of M-36 and Farley Rd. near Pinckney. Photo by author, 2015.*

## RELOCATION OF THE HICKS SCHOOL

*By Tim Bennett*

The Hicks school was descending down the well trodden path experienced by many other historic structures: abandoned, deteriorating, and in imminent danger of demolition. The timber-frame school had stood sentry at the corner of M-36 and Farley Rd near Pinckney since it was built around 1849. It was in desperate need of TLC and was slated to be removed one way or the other for the construction of a duplex. Dave Keller, a former local teacher and owner of the school, appealed to the community through a newspaper article offering it free of charge to anyone willing to move it with intentions of preserving it.

Although not unique, the Hicks school was certainly distinctive given its age as a timber

*(Continued on page 2)*

## *President's Column*

*By Tom M. Johnson*

### MORSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday, May 19, 2018

8:30 a.m.

Williamston Depot Museum

The Michigan One Room Schoolhouse Association's conference this year is going to focus on the future of MORSA.

### *We need your input!*

All individuals, marriages, organizations, corporations, etc. need to periodically reevaluate their mission. After 25 years it is (past) time for MORSA to do this. It is incumbent upon us to take an in-depth look at our organization--to set a course for its future.

### *We need your input!*

The major goal of our December board meeting was to plan the 25<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. The three board members present decided the location would be in Williamston, Michigan which is east of East Lansing on old US 16, now M 43, just north of I 96.

### *We need your input!*

To encourage participation, there will be **NO REGISTRATION FEE** and only a **\$10 donation** for a deluxe box lunch.

The board met again in February and fixed a schedule which follows:

- **8:30 to 9:** Registration along with coffee and pastries.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Hicks School (continued)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

frame structure built years before the Civil War at a time when many students attended school in a log cabin. The simplified Greek revival building could be considered a 19th century architectural treasure with its tamarack log rafters, quarter-sawn oak roof decking, square nails, hand hewn oak beams, rough cut studs, and plaster covered walls. A slate blackboard remains intact as well as two windows with wavy glass panes.

The prospect of moving the school intrigued Tim Bennett, owner of the NRHP-listed 1855 Greek Revival Warner house in Brighton. Tim is a sixth generation descendant of pioneer Timothy Warner and recently completed the exterior restoration of his ancestor's homestead. The likelihood of an antebellum fixture of the community lost forever spurred him to take on the project.

The relocation of the school took place on June 8, 2016. A small parade complete with two sheriff's cars, a lead truck, a semi pulling the school on an I-beam framework, the restoration specialist, and a couple of interested parties taking photos proceeded along the two lane roads. As it crept along, one of the movers climbed up on top of the school to push tree branches out of the way. Since the school took up the entire width of the roads, one of the biggest challenges was herding oncoming traffic to the sides. Particularly problematic was a round-about near Hamburg. The transportation department was compelled to

*(Continued on page 3)*



*The exterior restoration is complete with German cove siding, cedar shingles, and galvalume eavestroughs.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

- 9:00-9:15 Welcome
- 9:15-10:00 Presentation by Tim Bennett re:Hicks School
- 10:15-10:30 History of MORSA
- *Break provided*
- 10:30-11:15 Q & A about MORSA's future
- 11:15 to 12:30: Film on one-room school houses. I have seen it and it is excellent and mirrors many of the experiences I had in attending a one-room school.
- 12:30 to 1:15: Lunch, a very short membership meeting and an outline of the afternoon activity.
- Participants will receive a map of the area for a self-driving tour. Included in this tour is a meticulously restored one-room schoolhouse with an unusual history, a drive by of one of the nicest school-to-home restorations that I believe exists in the state and directions to two other school-to -home restorations.
- **Location:** Our meeting will be held at the Williamson Depot Museum located at 369 W. Grand River Ave., just west of the four corners on the south side of the street (next to Baryames Cleaners and across from Red Cedar Auto Sales). The former Curator of History at the Michigan State University Museum once stated that for a small-town museum, this museum is outstanding. Williamson also has excellent restaurants and antique stores. Accommodations include a bed and breakfast, a top notch mom and pop motel and two chain motels.

### *We need your input!*

Please come and help us. With your registration, please include your email so we can send you your packet by email, if possible. You will have the opportunity to order a specific box lunch at that time. Registration deadline will be May 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Oh, and by the way, we need new enthusiastic, energetic and involved board members!**

*(Conference Registration form on pg. 7)*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Hicks School (continued)*



*The school emerges from under the US 23 overpass at Silver Lake Rd. The school barely cleared the bottom of the overpass. Photo by author, 2016*

*(Continued from page 2)*

take down signs to allow the parade to proceed through the opposite direction. The sheriff's deputies managed to move cars in local resident's driveways, in some cases stacked five or six deep. The closest call occurred at the US 23 overpass. Just as the news crew arrived, the school was heading towards the overpass. A scene that appeared to make for a great photo-op suddenly seemed destined for disaster. The lead truck with measuring pole cleared, however, as the truck pulling the school rolled upwards beneath the overpass it also raised the school behind it. Luckily, it slipped past by only an inch or less. Later, on the homestretch, an oncoming semi was encountered just a mile from the Warner farm. The semi, complete with a 53' long trailer, was forced to back up about a 1/4 mile. After about 4 hours and 21 miles, the school was safely relocated.

Restoration efforts are now in the final stages with cedar shakes on the roof, period lighting, and cedar siding. Donated original items such as the patent 1878 cast iron wood stove will grace the interior. Archaeologically excavated artifacts from the former site including buttons, marbles, pen nibs, slate pencil fragments, ink wells, ceramics, and buckles will be on display. The building will be used for traditional arts such as wheel-thrown pottery and weaving.

*Photos of the relocation, restoration, and archaeological research are available at [http://www.warnerhomestead.com/hicks\\_school](http://www.warnerhomestead.com/hicks_school)*



*A view of the Hicks school attic complete with tamarack rafters and white oak roof deck. Photo by author, 2016.*



**Octagon School, Shiawassee Twp., Shiawassee Co.**

"The first school held in this district was in a small log schoolhouse about 1/4 mile west of the Octagon School and was taught by Jane Castle Cooper. The octagon-shaped school was designed by the Rev. George Reynolds and built in 1850 by a Mr. Mitchell, a local builder. The school was designed to give maximum visibility to both instructor and pupils. Rev. Reynolds had the floor built in concentric circles to create a tiered incline radiating from the building's center. The school served throughout the days of the rural schools and was closed in the early 1960s when it became necessary to annex to a K-12 district. The school has been remodeled into a very attractive home, the octagon shape having been preserved."

*~"Schools of Yesteryears: Our Heritage," Shiawassee Co. Historical Soc.*

"Pleasant Lake School: In Pioneer days, the children on the way to school had to watch out for wolves who lived in the forest instead of watching for automobiles as we of today must do."

*~from "The Development of Rural Education in Washtenaw Co." by Julius Haas, County Commissioner of Schools, 1943*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Switchel, Swigel or Swizzle*

*By Judy Shehigian*

I grew up on a cattle farm in Ionia County, Michigan. By the time our Benedict one-room school had closed for the summer, our cow herd had been driven to the summer pastures, and field work on the farms was well underway. I was eager to exchange my school shoes for boots or no footwear at all.

This was the 1940s. The horse barn was losing its residents, being replaced by tractors. I missed my favorite horses—Kit and Jim, Mack and Prince, Tom and Jerry.

No license was needed for a kid to drive a tractor, which I enjoyed doing, but preferred to ride a horse. After I outgrew my short legged pony, I could ride my dad's quarter horses. One of my favorite tasks on horseback was to carry jugs of water or switchel to men working in the fields. The dustiest, dirtiest fieldwork occurred in the hottest part of the summer. Putting up the hay and threshing oats, wheat or barley, the men became very thirsty. And while I sometimes carried water to them, more often it was switchel.

In the 1880s my grandmother, Alta Eagle Harwood, was a one-room school teacher in a lumber camp at Bruce Crossing in the western U.P. Growing up on a farm near Ionia, she had probably learned to make switchel from her mother, Cornelia Devereaux Eagle. As sometimes happens with kids, I mistakenly thought that the drink I delivered was pronounced as swigel—I hadn't listened carefully to my elders. I remember that it contained vinegar, ginger and brown sugar and, and that it was especially thirst quenching. As I was not then much interested in the culinary arts, I never paid much attention to the ingredients. Years later, I wondered if other families made switchel and what their ingredients might have been. I have some of Grandma's recipes, but not that one—probably she never wrote it down.

More recently, over several years, I found some articles mentioning switchel and recipes for it. One author says that switchel dates to the Puritans in New England. Most of my ancestors came to Michigan from New York state and Vermont via the Erie Canal. That author said switchel was sometimes

strengthened with a dash or more of rum or hard cider, and by pouring it in a jug and suspending it in a well overnight, or by cooling it in a mountain stream. That recipe called for 1 gallon of water, 2 cups of brown sugar, 1 cup of blackstrap molasses, 1 1/2 cup of vinegar and 1 teaspoon of ginger.

Another recipe calls for 1 quart of water, 1/2 cup if powdered ginger and juice of 1 lemon. It was also known as haymaker's punch or swizzle.

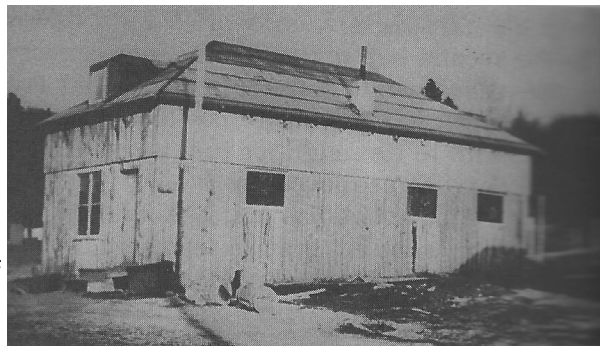
#### *From the internet re: switchel:*

Sources disagree about when switchel officially made its way to the United States, but agree that it has been here for well over 100 years.

Mention is made of it in The Long Winter by Laura Ingalls Wilder:

*"Ma had sent them ginger-water. She had sweetened the cool well-water with sugar, flavored it with vinegar, and put in plenty of ginger to warm their stomachs so they could drink till they were not thirsty. Ginger-water would not make them sick, as plain cold water would when they were so hot"*

Another name for switchel besides "haymaker's punch" — "Swizzy"



*Schoolhouse at Crescent on North Manitou Island, 1910. Crescent was a logging town from 1854-1915. This school was previously a saloon before the town went dry in 1909. During its peak, from 1908-1915, 300 people lived in the little logging town. In July, 1915 the town was closed down, the machinery moved out and Crescent became a ghost town. ~Ghost Towns of Michigan, Vol. I by Larry Wakefield, p.162.*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Schoolhouse Notes from the Past*

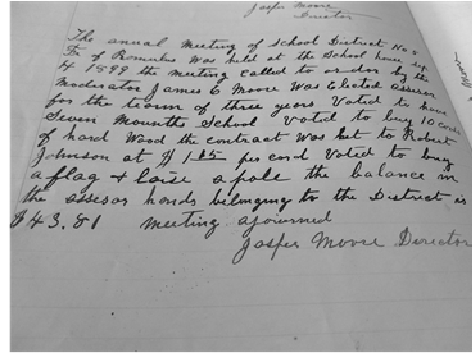
By Cheryl Vatcher-Martin

For this latest edition of School House Notes, I chose some later entries that were at the turn of the century with the inner workings of country schools via local school board meetings. These entries are from the one ledger that dates from 1866-1926, Romulus, Mt. Pleasant's original one room school.

The actual title on the ledger, Record of Proceedings of District School Meetings, and most of the pages contain records of more than one board meeting unless it was a lengthy session, then only the once a year meeting was carefully handwritten there. Remember too, that syntax and spelling were not what we studied and I intentionally do not change the written replication.

*"At the annual school meeting held at the school house September 5 1898 the meeting was called to order by the Moderator The report of the officers was accepted and adopted The vote on Free text books was Voted Down George L. Stoflet was Elected Moderator for the term of three years James E Moore Was Elected assessor to fill the Vacancy caused by the removal of Y W Monroe Voted to raise Eighty Dollars on the taxable property of the District for school purposes Voted to have Seven Mounths School Settled with YW Monroe the former assessor their was thirteen and 29/100 Dollars on the Trasurery wich was paid to James E Moore the present assessor Voted to adjourn Jasper Moore Director"*

Second entry follows on the same ledger page here. *"The annual meeting of school district No. 5 Fr. of Romulus was held at the school house sep 4 1899 The meeting called to order by the Moderator James E Moore was elected assessor for the term of three years Voted to have seven mounths school Voted to buy 10 cords of hard wood The contract was let to Robert Johnson at \$1/15 per cord Voted to buy a flag + raise a pole The balance in the assessor hands belonging to the District is \$43.81 Meeting Adjourned Jasper Moore, Director"*



*Mt. Pleasant schoolhouse ledger*

Photo by Author/Photographer Cheryl Vatcher- Martin, M.A.

Board member Cheryl Vatcher-Martin can be contacted at [Peroinc5@gmail.com](mailto:Peroinc5@gmail.com). Her one book, One Room Schools, Vanishing One Room Schools can be ordered for \$24 dollars. Contact for further information.

### *Mowry School*

#### *Ann Arbor Township District 6*

Following is a school history written in 1941. The teacher for that year was Bessie Brennan, but the history is unsigned. It is preserved at Washtenaw Intermediate School District library. Julius Haab, who was Superintendent of Washtenaw County Intermediate Schools at that time, commissioned each rural school to write a school history. Most of these histories are unsigned. They provide a valuable record of that era. The students worked on them as well as the teacher.

"Mowry School was named for James B. Mowry, who donated land for the school. The earliest record of a meeting at the school is in September 1872. all the building s were built on the same site, at the northwest corner of Warren Road and Earhart Road, at 3921 Warren Rd."

Addendum (added later): School pictures show 9 pupils in 1916, 14 in 1947, and 20 in 1954. Joanne Woodside Sherman of Plymouth said that when it closed in 1959, she was one of only 11 children in the school. She was the only child in her grade. It was quite a change when she transferred to a whole classroom of children her age at Northside School. In 1959, the district was annexed to the Ann Arbor Public School District. One of the Freeman School staff, Judy Woodside Tice, went there earlier. She said that finally the white frame building was moved away, and nothing remains but the well.

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Old Dixboro School*

*Superior Township, Washtenaw Co.*

*By Clara G. Richardson*

*December 14, 1976*

Dixboro School was built in 1888 on the public square now known as the Village Green. The land was sold to the #2 Fractional School district for \$30. The building, which cost \$1,200, was built between the closing of the spring term and the opening of the fall term. The construction consisted mainly of laying up the bricks, adding the floor, windows and roof, complete with bell and belfry, and plastering the walls. No water, furnace, electricity, plumbing or carpeting were installed.

In the one-room school, one teacher taught grades one through eight. Kindergarten was added in the late 1920s. The first teacher was Alice Quackenbush, paid a handsome salary of \$40.00 a month, for the fall term. Presumably the teacher for the winter term was a man, which was the custom in rural schools.

Originally the school had two outside entrances, side by side, opening into girls' and boys' coatrooms. The outside door at the northeast corner was added when the school was remodeled in 1927. The two outside entry doors were replaced by one door, and a furnace was installed in the southeast corner of the room. Later still an electric range and chemical toilets were added.

The building was no longer used as a public school after 1957-1958, but the school yard has continued to be used over the years as a playground for children and youth of the area. In the 1970s the school bell disappeared from the belfry and was replaced with the gift of another bell, which sadly does not have quite the same melodious tone.

The Dixboro United Methodist Church bought the school building and the school yard in 1958. The building was listed in the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites in 1984.

### *More Dixboro History*

*By Author Unknown*

Captain Dix, a sea captain, came to Washtenaw County in 1824 following a shipwreck, with a large sum of money, and bought 450 acres. He built a house that year on Plymouth Rd., then a frame barn—the first in the township and probably the first in the county. In 1826 he built a sawmill. He then founded Dixborough (the spelling changed to “Dixboro” in 1837).

The village grew to include at least two sawmills, two gristmills (probably on Fleming Creek), three taverns (one of which was kept by Dix), an ashery where potash or lye was made, a cooperage (barrel factory), a blacksmith shop, a creamery, a brick kiln and a post office (opened by Dix).

The plat for Dixborough included 64 lots around a village square. The property was bought for \$30. In 1827 the village was located in Ypsilanti Township, in 1828 in Panama Township, and in 1831 in Superior Township.

The brick schoolhouse, built at a cost of \$1,200, was paid for over a period of five years. Six foot shade trees were set out at the cost of 65 cents each. Seats for the entire school cost \$120. the woodhouse, built five years later, cost \$50 and was painted red. The oldest record on file shows Owen Goodspeed was Director in 1866, and M.A. Markam was the teacher.

At one time it was thought that Dixboro might outstrip Ann Arbor, but Dix sold out in 1833 and went to Texas after acquiring a reputation for being, “the most unpopular man in the county.” He and his wife were born and bred in Boston and apparently didn’t mix well with the “extra friendly” pioneers.

The village continued to be lively until Civil War time, but lost significant momentum when it was bypassed by the Michigan Central Railroad in 1839, as the railroad went further south.

**Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Assoc.  
Spring Conference  
May 19, 2018  
8:30 A.M. - 3 P.M.  
Registration Form**

Meeting Place: **Williamston Depot Museum**, 369 West Grand River Ave., Williamston, Michigan. (Just west of the Four Corners and across from Red Cedar Auto Sales.)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**No Registration Fee!**

**Suggested: \$10 donation for a deluxe box lunch**      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**2018-19 Membership Dues:**      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total**      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Retiree/Student:      \$10

Individual:      \$15

Organization:      \$25

Life-Time:      \$100

Please make your check payable to MORSA and mail to:

**Tom M. Johnson**

**4815 Barton Rd.**

**Williamston, MI 48895**

*\*Please note: Beginning in January of 2019, Membership Forms will be mailed to members in January of each year, separately from this newsletter, The Slate, and from the conference registration form.*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION



*Vance School, Antrim County, Michigan*

“Generations of Vance Children lived across the street from the brick schoolhouse that bore their name. The Vance children were able to hear the bell in the cupola ring every morning until 1927, when rural schools around East Jordan consolidated into one school system.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Ellsworth leased the building for use as a Sunday School, but ownership eventually reverted to the Vance family. The building was resold and is now a private home.

Jane Vance-Tennant, who attended the school from 1925 to 1927, recalls the school’s history: *“The land on which the school was built was given to the school district in Echo Township by my grandfather, George Vance, a farmer who came to the area from Canada. At Vance School there was no electricity; we had kerosene lamps which hung on the side walls and a woodstove for heat. I remember reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, reading class, and also penmanship—the Palmer method. And the school was the center of the community. We had box socials, and a Christmas program, and on the last day of school we had a potluck picnic attended by all of the families.”*

*~Michigan One-Room Schoolhouses by Mary Keithan, p.7*

### **Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association**

2017/2018

#### Officers:

Dr. Tom M. Johnson, Chair  
Rochelle Balkam, Vice-Chair  
Larry Schlack, Treasurer  
Hannah Geddes Wright,  
Secretary

#### Board Members:

Dana Deimel  
Tamara Gady  
Myrna Grove  
Dr. Thomas Gwaltney  
Yvonne Hafner  
Judy Shehigian  
Cheryl Vatcher-Martin  
Suzanne Daniel, Emeritus

#### The Slate Newsletter:

Hannah Geddes Wright, Editor

#### Membership Dues:

\$10 Senior (62+) or Student  
\$15 Individual,  
\$25 Organizations  
\$100 Life

Website Address:

<<http://www.one-roomschool.org>

*Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association  
c/o Tom M. Johnson  
4815 Barton Rd.  
Williamston, MI 488895*