

The Slate

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Spring 2019

It's Always Been About the Sharing By Jill Marcusse

The **North Pine Lake School**, also referred to as the **Brown School**, was built in 1873. It was donated to the Bernard Historical Museum in 1963 and moved there to become, as it was in its working days, the centerpiece of the community's treasures.

"A rural gem", as MORSA chair Tom Johnson said, the school sits up on a hill with open fields unfolding out its north facing wall of windows. Upper Crooked Lake lies down the bank on the south. The school is a quiet, unassuming beauty complete with a pot-bellied stove and an assortment of desks that delight collectors.

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North Pine Lake (Brown) School, Barry Co., MORSA's 2019 Annual Conference to be held May 18th in Delton, near Plainwell at the Bernard Museum and the Brown School.

The New Website for MORSA By Lynda J. Farquhar

The Michigan One Room Schoolhouse Association Board's goal is to identify and catalogue the 7,200 one room schools in Michigan, a worthy but challenging endeavor. (Note: To date 7,000 schools have been identified.) The Association's website must reflect this goal, as well as being a resource for anyone doing research on or simply being interested in the topic. Unfortunately, our previous website did not meet this standard. While containing a wealth of information, the old site was unwieldy and not user-friendly. One of the major issues was the difficulty in using the search engine for locating one-room Schools in Michigan and Schoolhouse Museums.

The Board recently approved having the old website retired and a new one created. Will Schikorra, an MSU sophomore with a good deal of web creation experience, is developing our new site. The new website will be on the Wix database which is known for being user-friendly and has huge storage capability. The new database will be organized to allow searches of schools by county, township and name. All the information on the old website will be available on the new

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New MORSA Website

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site, but will be condensed and re-organized to maximize function. The old tabs included the ability to join the organization, to search for schools, to list references, and to contact the organization.

We expect the new site to be up in mid-March, 2019, although the database itself will not be fully complete for another six weeks. Once a good running version is available, screen shots will be released as “sneak peeks.” Dr. Lyn Farquhar, a new Board member, and Will Schikorra will be doing a demonstration of the new website at the Annual Conference on May 18, 2019. We hope to see you there and to answer your questions.

The History Of Crippen School Superior 4-1

The following article, excerpted from “The Ten Original Schools of Superior Township” was written in 1941 by the school children of Crippen School Superior Twp., Washtenaw Co., Michigan. (As originally written.)

The Crippen Family lived in Albany County New York. To them was born a boy in the year of 1824 by the name of Roger. The family was thinking of coming West, so in 1828 they started to what is now Michigan. They went by the way of the Erie Canal. The captain of the boat had a very bad way of saying things he did not like, which we call swearing. Roger soon had learned it too so his father took him into hand. It was bad for Roger because his father was a minister and Roger soon forgot the captain[']s language.

The boat docked at Detroit and the Crippens were on their way. There were about six of them. They took an oxen on a long and weary ride to what is now known as Dixboro. It rained and the roads was bad. Then other times the sun was hot. They traveled for at least two weeks. They settled in a house that now belongs to Mr. Bennis.

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The Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Tom M. Johnson, Chairman

To be honest, at this time last year I was concerned about the future viability of MORSA. Attendance at our conferences had been decreasing as had our membership. Because of illness and aging, only four or five of MORSA board members attended the meetings consistently. At one of our meetings, there were only two others beside me present. During this time, several members of the board felt that MORSA had run its course and they produced a position paper for discussion on why MORSA should disband.

This all changed last year at our annual conference at the Williamston Depot Museum. We had a first-class speaker who appeared to energize the group with his discussion regarding his purchase and moving of Hicks School to restore. Following his presentation, we had an “open mike” session and it turned out that the conference attendees expressed a real interest in having MORSA continue. Several volunteered to be on the board and to date we have five new board members who have not only energy and enthusiasm but are participating in a major way in developing this year’s conference.

I get emails weekly from people who want information or who have additions or corrections to the information on our website, but we find the website difficult to work with and have not yet made the changes. One of our new board members introduced us to an MSU student who is building us a new website which will be updated and user friendly. Once the website is launched, you may access it at www.miorsa.org.

We look forward to this year’s annual conference to be held May 18th in Delton, near Plainwell at the Bernard Museum and the Brown School. In my opinion, both the museum and the school are truly “real gems.” The program will be both informative and educational and I guarantee that you will enjoy and learn from it.

My pessimism has turned into optimism and enthusiasm.

27th Annual MORSA Conference
Bernard Historical Museum and Brown School, Delton, Michigan
Saturday, May 18, 2019

Note: Until we know how many are attending the conference, we will not know whether the morning session will be held at the Delton Library or at the Brown School on the grounds of the Bernard Museum.

Our 27th Annual Conference this year is dedicated to the memory of Larry Schlack who died in 2018. Larry was a founding member of MORSA who had served as president and at the time of his death was treasurer. He was a very active member and truly a lodestar for the organization. We all miss him!

This year's conference is remarkable, in both the venue and the presentations. I can guarantee that you will learn a lot, and it will be well worth attending.

VENUE: The Bernard Historical Museum is a fascinating place with eight buildings and over 40,000 artifacts. In this issue of *The Slate* board member Jill Marcusse's article "It's Always Been About Sharing" contains information on Dr. Bernard, the development of the museum and the North Pine Lake School, often referred to as the Brown School. For more information on the venue, visit the museum's website www.bernardmuseum.org.

PRESENTATIONS: In reviewing material from many of MORSA's past conferences, I find the morning's presentations to be a departure from what we have covered in the past. The first discussion will be an introduction to our new, user friendly website, www.miorsa.org (not yet launched), plus for those who are interested, hints on how to develop a website. We are fortunate to have the young man, Will Schikorra, who is developing the website, accompanied by board member, Lyn Farquhar, an accomplished author, demonstrate how to access and utilize the website, with welcome interactions from the audience.

The second speaker, Claudia Throop, will discuss how to research a school. It is amazing how this woman can ferret out in depth information on the internet. She will give examples of how to proceed. You will be amazed at her enthusiasm and expertise. Board member Jill Marcusse will also give a description of her school, the Doster School.

Before lunch an overview of the school and museum will be presented by a board member of the Bernard Historical Museum Board.

LUNCH & MEETING: The lunch will be scrumptious. Several of us have eaten at The Local Grind Coffee House that is preparing the lunch. We hope the weather will allow us to eat outside on the grounds of the museum. A very short business meeting will be held along with the Schoolhouse of the Year presentation.

AFTERNOON: The afternoon program consists of touring the Brown School and the Bernard Museum and visiting the Doster School which has been restored as a family retreat. It is beautiful with antiques galore. It is also described in owner Jill Marcusse's article "Renovate, Rejuvenate Doster School" that also appears in this issue of *The Slate*.

There is a Registration Form with the letter I sent out in February to MORSA members. Confirmation of your registration and the morning venue location will be sent via email to those who supply their email addresses or by USPS.

Y'all come, ya hear!



*Iddles as it stood circa 1970. The belfry and bell are gone. So are the prominent **STANDARD SCHOOL** plate that was displayed below the center window and the twenty-five foot flag pole that stood out front. But, as Daniel Webster once so eloquently pleaded for Dartmouth College, “It is, sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet, there are those who love it!” The same may be said of Iddles and the dream that became a reality.*

THE LAST BANQUET

Casco Township, Allegan County

The American adoration for the **little red schoolhouse** was roundly debunked in a recent magazine article based on exhaustive current research. We survivors of the one-room country school experience refer to all such activity as “looking it up in the encyclopedia.” At least that’s what Walt Disney’s Jiminy Cricket said.

The vast majority of small rural schools can trace their origins to the second half of the nineteenth century. They began with a dream and a bell, but no indoor plumbing, no electricity, scarce paper & books, and only one young teacher for all grades—typically first through eighth. Few of these schools remained beyond 1970 having fallen victim to consolidation, annexation and, some *research* has concluded, progress.

Such was the case of Iddles, a small one-room rural school tucked within the fruit and vegetable belt of southwest Michigan’s Allegan County, a short five miles from Lake Michigan. Unlike Iddles

most rural schools were not red, but as their students use to say, and we alumni still do, “What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?”

Victorious in the Great War, the one “to make the world safe for democracy,” Cascoites marched proudly into the Roaring Twenties. Riding a tidal wave of community spirit accentuated by Charles Lindbergh’s 1927 trans-Atlantic flight, nearby neighbor Mary Litts spearheaded a drive to organize a school reunion. In July of 1928 a meeting was held at the school and Mary, the oldest alum present, was elected president of a reunion committee. Mary had attended school in the original log schoolhouse that had taken the name of its builder, her father, Thomas Iddles.

On August 9, 1928 the first Iddles reunion was held in front of the schoolhouse. Nearly 100 alumni, parents, teachers and students enjoyed a potluck picnic lunch laid out on the bed of Andrew Litts’s truck. Andrew was Mary’s son and her grandson, Harry, was a current Iddles sixth grader. A Miss Evans of The Rural Department of Western State Normal in Kalamazoo served as a program speaker. Following her remarks it was unanimously agreed upon to hold the next year’s reunion at the popular Oakdale Park and Pavilion on Upper Scott Lake east of Pullman. The second reunion expanded to over twice the size of the first, with aging alumni proudly recounting their happy school memories. Eleven reported they’d attended the frame school (1867-1900), while eight answered rollcall in the original log schoolhouse (1859-1867).

Basking in the afterglow of the second reunion, plans were set in motion for a first ever annual autumn banquet to celebrate the life of the school. In September, soon after the start of the fall semester, PTA president Eunice Osman began work organizing an all-school banquet/gala. A committee was formed and the date of November 26, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, was set. Committee members included first-year teacher

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The Last Banquet

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Miss Mable Barnes and parents Eunice Osman, Etta Lyman, Nancy Hassett and Flossy Adkin. The stellar contributions of these women to the success of Iddles over the years stretched far beyond this illustrious banquet.

The four page program also included the lyrics to several of the songs that were sung and chants that were repeated plus a cover that displayed a student's rendition of a dog *Howling for IDDLES!*

Virtually all students and their parents attended this early evening event. Several arrived in cars and trucks, many families walked carrying kerosene lanterns, and a few came in horse drawn wagons. The school had no electricity nor indoor plumbing. There were a few kerosene window lamps and parents supplied kerosene lantern lighting for evening events. Miss Barnes and her students had prepped their classroom for a pot luck banquet hall and then the following change over to an auditorium complete with a low stage behind a wire-hung curtain. All assisted with clean-up while older boys chanted, "There Ain't No Flies On Us! There Ain't No Flies On Us! There may be flies on the Hadaway guys, but there ain't no flies on us!" Several area rural schools, in addition to Hadaway, fell victim to the chant much to the pleasure of the students and the amusement of their parents.

The fall banquet took place one month after the disastrous 1929 stock market crash, later considered the

signal that ushered-in the Great Depression. The economic effects of the financial panic had yet to be felt in the farming community surrounding Iddles. However, the second annual Iddles School Banquet never materialized. The school community continued to enjoy regular Christmas Pageants, Spring Musicals and end-of-year School Picnics until May of 1965 when the school closed its doors for the summer for the very last time.

However, annual summer reunions continued uninterrupted to the present day, with the next, #91, scheduled for the third Sunday in July 2019. We alumni look forward to reconnecting with childhood friends and sharing memories formed during our *School Days* at the little red schoolhouse. And "myth be damned!" our bonds will never be broken.

*Author Clare Adkin writes: I attended Iddles School from 1948-1955. Both of my parents are in the grade school picture that is part of my submission and both attended the "Last Banquet." Flossy Adkin was my grandmother and Billy Adkin was my uncle. After graduating from South Haven High School in 1961, I attended Michigan State University followed by a 30 career in teaching/coaching in Michigan. In 1995 my wife Sally and I moved to North Carolina where I spent 8 more years in education retiring in 2008 as a consultant for both the North Carolina and National Councils for Economic Education. Lastly, I authored **Brother Benjamin: A History of the Israelite House of David** (Andrews University 1990), **Quiet Guilt: The State of Michigan v. Starr** (Warren Publishing, Inc. 2010), and **A Country School** (Warren Publishing, Inc. 2012). I hope "The Last Banquet" will be a part of a current writing project.*



Iddles School 1930-1931 (note barefoot boys in front row)



Renovate, Rejuvenate
Doster School
By Jill Doster Marcusse

Like Henry David Thoreau said, “I was born in the nick of time.” I was in the last kindergarten class at Doster School, before the cross-roads community checked the ballot, (a straightforward Yes or No), to consolidate the one-room schoolhouse into Plainwell Schools.

In 1955 there were seven of us in kindergarten, a bumper baby boom. We had a small round table at the back of the room. An orange crate held our supplies.

I walked to school with my sister. My cousins were there, plus maybe eight other families, about 30 total students. At recess we had a teeter-totter and a swing to play on, but the thing I liked best was to play in the lilac bushes.

My dad had gone here in the 1930s. He would come early and lay wood for the stove. His father had attended the first Doster school, a log school that had burned.

Our school was #3 and originally built in the late 1880’s as a Congregational Church. It became a school in 1925. Five large windows were installed in the east wall, bringing the building up to the Board of Education’s code.

After the consolation in 1956, the schoolhouse was empty, used only for an occasional square-dance until reverting to a church again. Some folks from a Kalamazoo Reformed Church noticed there were a lot of kids in the Doster area and asked my grandpa, George Dewey Doster, if they could use the building to start a Sunday School. He said yes and many good people from Kalamazoo came out to teach and preach. One of my favorites worked at Eckrich and “drove a baloney wagon”.

He took our Christian Endeavor group in for a tour of the plant on one of many memorable outings.

Attendance at the church grew and an addition was built off the back. A few years later a new A-frame church was built two miles up the road. And the schoolhouse was abandoned again—except for the raccoons in the rafters.

My cousin bought it from Grandpa and we bought it from him in 1976. Another phase of its life began, re-purposed to be a home.

With the extraordinary help from a carpenter friend, Mark Bonsignore, and the structural advice of a generous architect, Maurice Goodreau, the transformation began. We took the ceiling back up to the original church’s height which gave us enough room for a loft. A dog-legged staircase ascends to this cozy and expansive room. The bracing for the loft ties it to the window-wall and gives stability to the whole.

In the kitchen, there’s a wood cook stove; in the dining area, reclaimed oak wainscoting and my grandmother’s prised hanging lamp.

The lilac bushes remain. They may well be in bloom May 18th. You are invited to stop by after your visit to the Bernard Museum and see.

The Beginning of the One-Room Schoolhouse
—or When It Was Not...

~Excerpted from Inaugural Address by Dean W. Scott Westerman (Spring 1994)

In reviewing the history of Michigan, it is difficult to establish a specific date for the construction of the first one-room school. It is easy, however, to say when it was not present.

Native Americans established no schools during the centuries they occupied this territory before white men arrived. The Indian youth in Michigan learned their lessons from observing their elders, or from ceremonies and games which instructed them concerning the ways of adults. Only the Aztecs and Incas are known to have established schools.

It's Always Been about the Sharing

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The school was remodeled in 1929-1930 to include bead-board curved cupboards at the room's corners for storage and inside bathrooms. The **Bernard Historical Museum** is an eight building collection of items donated by the descendents of the area's earliest settlers. A dugout canoe pulled from the lake's bottom and a Bible in the first people's language, take visitors back to the beginnings of Barry County.

Farm implements, a blacksmith shop, general store and seamstress cottage augment the school and museum, and Dr. Prosper Bernard's fifteen room, six bed hospital he built in 1937, beside his home on the shore of Upper Crooked Lake, between Delton and Prairieville.

He closed the hospital when he was called up for active duty in WWII as a medical officer in the Task Invasion Force in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Returning home, he focused on the emerging field of x-ray and did not re-open the hospital, only the offices and clinic. He worked at Pennock Hospital, Hastings, as Director of X-ray until retiring in 1951. He continued to work as an x-ray consultant/specialist throughout southern Michigan before retiring from medicine a final time in 1957.

He then began his second career as museum founder and director. An avid historian Dr. Bernard had long collected artifacts and antiques. He donated these and the former hospital building in 1962 to the newly formed and registered Bernard Historical Society.

Tongue Twisters

*Does this shop stock short socks with spots?

*Sinful Caesar sipped his soda, seized his snoot, and sneezed.

*Three gray geese in the green grass grazing; gray were the geese and green was the grazing.

*The old scold sold the school a coal scuttle.

The History Of Crippen School Superior 4-1

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The Crippen children attended to school on Stommel Hill which was the first school of District 4, Superior Township. The children were punished by whip or by the teacher's ruler. They had no pencils because they were not known then. They used slates and they had a box stove. You may have seen one, but if you have not it is a long steel box, which they put a log in all at once instead of many pieces. Each child brought wood for the fire. The children had to sit on benches. The school at that [time] had no grades. They just read a book until they finished it even if they had to wait till the next year. They brought their own ink, which they made themselves and wrote with a quill pen.

The teacher was paid \$1.75 a week. A man taught in the winter and a woman taught in the summer, because the bigger boys came in the winter and the girls came in the summer. They had school on the lawn if it was hot. They had cherry trees on the lawn and some of the bigger boys dropped cherries to the girls, and smaller ones. They had a hand-bell and had no lights so you see we have a lot more than the old school had.

Before they tore the old school down it was valued at \$30.00. The second school was built in 1870 and was a frame school too. The school board bought the land for \$24.00. The school had desks and they were hollow so the smaller ones could sleep in them in the afternoon. The hours were the same as today, starting at 9 AM. and closing at 4PM. There was still no lights or pencils or plaster. The children drank from a pail & later they got cups. When the school was built there was still no grades. During the years the school acquired bulletin boards, lights, black board, windows shadows [shades], etc.

The teacher was still paid a small amount. They were paid according to what time of year it was. If he or she was the first in the season they got good pay, but if they came later in the year they got a smaller amount. The teacher was not required to have a college education.

School Days of the 60's (1860)

(Recalled by teacher, Mrs. Mary Coburn of Perry at age 82)

No automobile for her, nor silk stockings, low shoes or short skirts. Instead her stockings were of the woolen, home made variety, possibly colored with walnut or hickory or indigo; her shoes were of tallow soaked calfskin with buckskin laces, and her dress and storm coat of delaine (wool), a combination of wearing apparel calculated to conspire against the elements of the season.

She recalled how her dresses came to her shoe tops and there were six breadths around the bottom because she wore hoops.

She had been a teacher at the Fuller School. When the bell was out of commissions, school was called with a hand bell. When that was not working, as often happened, she rapped on the window with a ruler. At one time when her watch was not working, one of the boys cut notches on the window sill to denote the hours of 9, 12, 1 and 4, and the time of day was indi-

cated when the sun reached those notches.

She kept no record book, the roll being recorded on sheets of foolscap, sewed together. It was not required that teachers make a report on attendance or any other conditions of the school and when she concluded a pupil should be passed to a higher grade, she just told him so.

Each pupil had a slate with a slate pencil attached with a string and a red primer which they sat upon when not in use as there were no desks.

Many teachers taught their pupils the alphabet by pointing out the letters with their pencils. The smarter children learned the alphabet by heart, but few knew them by sight. There always was confusion between O and Q, and B and D. Every winter the pupils went through the Davis arithmetic and several worked the Christian Era examples where the number of years, months, weeks, days, minutes and seconds since the beginning of that period had to be told.

On the last day of school there was singing and recitations. For the older boys and girls there were corn husking bees, where the boys who found a red ear got to kiss the girl nearest to them. This was followed by a dance and each of the boys paid the fiddler .25 cents.

Schoolhouse Association

2017/2018

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