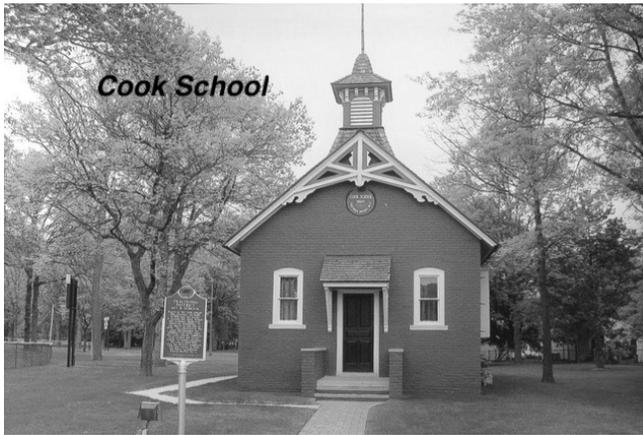


# The Slate

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## **Cook Schoolhouse named ‘One Room Schoolhouse of the Year’**

By: [Maria Allard](#) | [Grosse Pointe Times](#) | Published July 23, 2019

GROSSE POINTE WOODS — During the late 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century, the state of Michigan had more than 7,000 one-room schoolhouses where students learned core subjects under the guidance of their teachers.

Many of these treasured relics have been maintained and serve as historic sites, including the Cook Schoolhouse, which the Grosse Pointe Woods Historical Commission has preserved in the city of Grosse Pointe Woods.

### *President’s Column* *By Tom M. Johnson*

#### *Did You Know? - I didn’t!*

At a recent get-together a person came up to me and stated that she had heard that I was interested in rural education and one-room schoolhouses. She then asked if I knew anything about Rosenwald schools. She said that she had read an article some time ago that referred to them as being very important in the education of African American students in the rural South in the early 1900s. She also alluded to the fact that they had been essentially forgotten. I had to tell her that I had never heard of Rosenwald schools and could not help her.

This piqued my interest and when I got home, I went to Google and put in Rosenwald schools. A number of sources came up and I learned a great deal. The following information is taken from three or four of the sources available on Google. I found that Rosenwald

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*Arcola School, Hale County, Alabama, built 1923-24*

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *Cook School*

*(Continued from page 1)*

The Michigan One Room School Association, or MORSA, recently awarded the 2019 One Room Schoolhouse of the Year award to the Cook Schoolhouse. On the evening of July 11, former Commission member John Parthum — also a member of MORSA — presented a plaque to the commission and a \$250 grant for the Cook Schoolhouse account.

“We were so delighted to award the Cook School the William Winglar-Larry Schlack One Room Schoolhouse of the Year Award,” Rochelle Balkam, vice chair of MORSA, said in an email. “Our organization has traced the stories of many hundreds on our new website. The state has more one-room schools still standing than nearly any other state, and we strive to honor that heritage.”

MORSA’s mission is to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation for one-room schoolhouses, and to encourage the preservation of one-room schoolhouses through conferences, newsletters, awards and more. MORSA also coordinates and furthers the programs of other historical societies and historians as they relate to one-room schoolhouses, and it acts as a statewide communications network.

“Cook School is exemplary of the goals that we on the board foster. John Parthum spearheaded the project and was the commission representative at the conference to accept the award,” Balkam said. “The award recognizes the school which meets our criteria.”

Over the years, Parthum, of Grosse Pointe Woods, has conducted research on the schoolhouse, which has a historical marker. In 2016, MORSA held a meeting at the Cook Schoolhouse, and not long after, Parthum filled out an application to be considered for the One Room Schoolhouse of the Year recognition.

The Cook School, first known as the Fractional District No. 9 School, was built in 1890 near the corner of present-day Mack Avenue and Lochmoor Boulevard. The historic school welcomed students living in Grosse Pointe and Gratiot Township, which is now Harper Woods.

According to the application Parthum submitted, the school was assumed to be built by local farmers and residents. The building was made from brick, wood and plaster, and the school was used from 1890 to 1922. In 2006, the schoolhouse was moved to the

parking lot of the Grosse Pointe Woods City Hall complex at 20025 Mack Plaza, where it has stood ever since.

The schoolhouse had six windows and now has eight. The wood floor, covered with cork tiles and later carpet, was returned to the original wood floor. The earliest photos indicate the porch steps were wooden.

There were two cloakrooms in the front hall, one for boys and one for girls. A rope was used to ring the bell, and there were outhouses in the back. A wood-burning stove originally provided heat, and the shed was used for the storage of wood.

The website [waymarking.com](http://waymarking.com), shared information about the Cook Schoolhouse.

“Property for the school was obtained on January 13, 1890, when the School District No. 9 purchased one third acre of the original Louis Cook farm for \$160 from Louis and Matilda Cook,” the website states. “The school was built to accommodate 60 students in grades one through eight, but per the annual report, only 30 attended the first year. The curriculum consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, English grammar, U.S. history and spelling. Later, physiology and civil government were added. Kindergarten was offered around 1920.”

According to the website, “The building was extended 10 feet sometime between 1892 and 1898 to accommodate up to 75 students. The school system was consolidated into Grosse Pointe Rural Agriculture District #1 in 1922, at which point the school board purchased an REO vehicle and the children were transported to Kerby school. One of the first teachers (1894-95) was Genevieve Vernier. She was paid about \$30 per month. Many of the streets in the City of Grosse Pointe Woods are named for families whose children attended Cook School.”

According to Parthum, the Grosse Pointe Woods Community Center oversees and uses the building, and the schoolhouse is rented out to residents for events and parties. The schoolhouse is used by city commissions and committees for meetings, and the Grosse Pointe Historical Society uses it for book talks. Because of this, the schoolhouse has been updated with restrooms, lighting, insulation and upgraded electrical work.

*For more information on the Michigan One Room School Association, visit the website [www.miorsa.org](http://www.miorsa.org).*

## *President's Column*

*(Continued from page 1)*

schools referred to any of the more than 5000 schools (4977), shops (163) and teacher homes (217) that were built starting in 1912 primarily for the education of African American children in the South. This project was the product of a partnership between Julius Rosenwald, a Jewish American clothier who became part owner and president of Sears Roebuck and Company (1908 to 1922), and the African American leader, educator and philanthropist Booker T. Washington, who was president of the Tuskegee Institute. Washington supplied the idea and Rosenwald the money, first from his personal funds and later from the Rosenwald foundation established in 1917 by the Rosenwald family for "the well-being of mankind".

As one can well imagine, support for education of African American children in the South in the early 1900s was at best mediocre. It was felt by some of the citizens of the South that education for African American children was troublesome and unnecessary. The schools that they had were segregated and chronically under-funded.

The original Rosenwald schools were built starting in 1912 near the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. They were two-room schools and were designed so that they could be used by the community. There was no electricity so there were big windows for light and ventilation as well as a stove for heat. One room was for grades one through three and the second four through seven. At the end, there were almost 5,000 schools for African American children in 883 counties in 15 states from Maryland to Oklahoma, including all the former confederacy states. The construction phase ended in 1932 while the Rosenwald school program ended in 1954 with the Supreme Court ruling declaring segregation in education unconstitutional. Rosenwald schools then became obsolete and were either abandoned or demolished. It is estimated that today only 10 to 12 percent survive. At least 60 former Rosenwald schools are listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, and in 2015 the national trust classified the Rosenwald schools as national treasures.

Why was this program so successful? In order

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## HOW I FLUNKED KINDERGARTEN

*By Dr. Robert (Bob) Christensen*

In 1940 I was 5 years old and in kindergarten. Our school was the proverbial one-room country school. It had been built in the 1880's when the farming area was settled. In 1940 it was very little changed from the way it was at the turn of the century. There was a large pot-bellied stove to provide heat in the winter (later changed to a coal stoked furnace), a long handled pump at the well outside the building, and the boys and girls outhouses on the right and left rear corners of the acre of land that was the school yard. Recreational equipment consisted of a set of swings on the left side of the school and a rudimentary ball diamond on the right side. Thus, boys tended to play on one side and the girls on the other. One large shade tree was at the back of the lot and another near the swings. However, for much of the time there was no real segregation of the sexes. Girls played softball with the boys because there were not enough boys to make up a full team, let alone have two teams to play against each other. In the winter with snow we all played a tag game called "Fox and Geese" using the ball field.

Total enrollment for the 8 grades and kindergarten never got above 24 for the years I attended. Thus, classes of 4 or fewer students were the norm. I think my 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduating class may have been the largest ever with 2 boys and 2 girls. The teacher often grouped classes together for some subjects so that the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, for example, would have American history together. The classes would come to the front of the room for "recitation" and sit on a bench like a church pew for the teacher to lead the lesson. We would hand in our homework assignment to be graded and the teacher would hand back the graded work from the earlier class. The teacher would then give instruction on the day's topic and make the homework assignment for the next class. The teacher would use the large blackboard at the front of the room to illustrate such topics as spelling, arithmetic, history, etc. Students would be called to the board to show their skills in spelling and arithmetic in particular.

Everyone normally walked to school summer and winter. The school was located such that the maximum distance for any student to walk was 2 miles. At the time I was 5 my brother was only a baby and my sister was not yet born so I was the only one from my

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### *How I Flunked Kindergarten*

*(Continued from page 3)*

family in school. I usually walked with the Ostrander kids. At that time there were three in school: Betty, Dorothy, and Jim. Betty and Dorothy must have been 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders and Jim was probably in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. So they were “big kids” compared to me. Most of the time they were ok to me, given the fact that I was so much younger and puny besides.

All of this leads up to the reason why I flunked kindergarten. The winters are pretty severe in that area of Michigan and the snow can get deep. In perspective, one should recognize that when you are only 3 feet tall, a foot of snow is a lot of snow. When we did get heavy snow it could be 2 or 3 days before the county snow plows would plow the roads open. The main highways had first priority, then secondary roads, and then our roads. Since kids walked to school, snow was not a reason to cancel school. That only happened if the teacher was not able to get there. It was common that the teacher would live in the community or relatively nearby. I do remember that Mrs. Denny who lived in Lakeview would sometimes hike the half-mile from M91 to the school if the side road was not open. The teacher was expected by the school board to be there come “hell or high water”! In addition, she was expected to be there early so that the stove/furnace was up and running and the classroom warmed by 8 am.

On this particular winter day we had about a foot of new snow overnight, and the wind had created a few drifts on our road. Just past our driveway a gentle hill rose for the next quarter mile and a fence row about half way up this rise had created a nice drift perhaps nearly 2 feet deep. Just before the Ostrander's came by our place, Mike's truck started up the road. Mike, our next door neighbor, was a potato buyer/dealer and farmer who had a fairly large enclosed truck used to haul the bagged potatoes to market. A truck, because of its dual drive wheels and heavy treaded tires could often buck its way through snow where cars could not.

The truck having just passed by had created narrow wheel paths through the snow for us kids to walk in. It was much easier to walk in those tracks than to walk in the snow up to our knees to one side of the tracks. We fairly soon caught up to the truck which was having to back up and go ahead again as it bogged down. Just as we 4 kids were nearly to the truck, the driver shifted to reverse to back up and make another run at the snow drift. The other kids quickly got out of the wheel track and off to the side. I, however, as the tail end, smallest kid, and totally bundled up in snowsuit and heavy boots, could not clamber out of

the track in time. I can still remember seeing the back end of the truck coming at me and the wheels grabbing my feet and legs and pulling me under.

The next thing I remember is the driver trying to pull me out from under the left front wheel which was on my feet and lower legs. I remember nothing about the next few minutes. I do remember being conscious of the fact that I was riding in Herb Hansen's brand new Chevy, which was thrilling! I remember only snatches of arrival at the hospital and my stay there. I have no idea how long I was there or what was done to me. I know that I had an impression that it was a nice place!

From others I found out that one of the Ostrander kids had run back to the farm and had got Dad from the barn where he was milking and told him what had happened. Dad apparently ran the quarter mile at full gallop. He then carried me to Herb Hansen's where the truck driver had run to get help and they immediately loaded me into the car for the ride to the hospital.

I remember little about the next few days and weeks, but I do remember some aspects of my recovery. I remember that I was missing some strips of hair on my head and had some ridges and bumps up there for a few years (my skull must have been a bit soft and flexible). I definitely remember having to learn to walk again. At first I could only sidle sideways like a crab, holding on to the backs of chairs as I circled the dining room table and then painfully making the first steps forward.

All told, I must have been absent from school about 6 weeks, and at that stage in life that's a long time. Also kindergarten was taken as seriously as any other school grade, and I was hopelessly behind the other 3 kids in my class. That's why I had to do kindergarten over again and partially the reason why I graduated from high school the same year my wife graduated from her college in spite of the fact I am older than she is (she skipped a grade of school). I am alive today because of the snow which obviously compacted under me as I was crushed under the truck wheels.

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

### *“Historic Notes From The Past Continues”*

by Cheryl Vatcher Martin, M.A.

As my research continues into school house memories and notes from the past, it truly is one gigantic lesson plan laid out in front of me. Whether I am researching board minutes and notes, payments to the teachers, or someone cleaning the schoolhouse, it's there, a textbook in motion filled with primary sources. I primarily concentrate on the historic City of Romulus as there is a wealth of information



there from the 1800's that contains the making of its Township, (which it was back in the 1800's) and the one room schools' ledgers with primary resources contained inside of District School House No. 1, originally built in 1839.

Then there is Dixboro's One Room School, Dixboro, MI, which now has a little library in front where we swap out books, or just donate one. It originally was built in 1888 as a red brick structure (replacing one that was built in the 1830's) and was part of Superior Township School District No. 2. It stands on land set aside in the original village plat of 1826. What is intriguing about this school is the large circular wooden swing which is original to this school house. When I took a swing on it a few months ago, I could envision the laughter of the scholars who were on it back then. At District School House No. 1 in Romulus, it has been neat to explain to 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars about the school house still standing from 1839.

Here we revisit a ledger entry from "Hayti's" (High-tie) One Room School, (Romulus, MI), Sept 2 1901 (as originally composed): *The annual school meeting called to order by WM Tinkham Moderator to assessors and Director report read and excepted Motioned to proceed to the Election of moderator Patrick McConlogue received the majority of votes cast and was declared Elected Moved and supported that the voters proceed the vote on the proposition to build a new school house 20 votes were cast all in favor of the proposition Moved and supported that the school site be changed Motion lost Moved and supported that a building committee be appointed Wilber Bird, Charles Butler, Clifton Tinkham were approved, Moved and supported that the District build a brick school House Motion lost- Moved and supported that the District build a frame school House*

*Motion carried Moved and supported -that there be eight months of school without any vacation – Moved and supported that the District raise \$900 to Build School House James M. Orr Jr Director Sept 4 1901 At a meeting of the District board and the building committee all members being present except Charles Butler it was agreed that the \$900 voted to build school house should be raised in three years \$300 to be raised each year for three years*

My facebook page, Michigan One Room School Houses and Historic Buildings, continues to grow. At least 349 individuals or historical societies receive a notification when there's a posting or picture! Check it out and check "like" please; and feel free to send pictures, or history to me there! Sharing of this history is important for the future generations!

*~My latest short non-fiction book is titled, Historic Notes From The Past by Cheryl Martin, \$30 includes shipping. I can be reached at [Peroinc5@gmail.com](mailto:Peroinc5@gmail.com). As a historian, author, and educator, I enjoy presenting on the country schools of America. While in Wayne, MI a few months ago, I was lucky enough to be bequeathed two teacher contracts from the 1930's as well as a few pictures. The lady told me, no one in her family wanted them, so she brought them specifically for me. My program was well promoted( I do this for gratis) and quite a few individuals had stories to tell during and after my presentation. I am keeping school house history alive with my words, photographs, and presentations. Your knowledge and stories are valuable, too. Share them with us!*

## *The Michigan One Room Schoolhouse conference-2019*

*By Rochelle Balkam*

The MORSA conference was held in the Delton community. The library graciously hosted the event. “Goody bags” were presented to each attendee as they arrived. The keynote program was given by Wil Schikorra, with the able assistance of Lyn Farquhar. He explained the new website, *miorisa*, which he had been working on since the organization took it over. If you haven’t yet viewed the new site, do so; it is outstanding and much more user friendly than it was previously. Rochelle Balkam presented a tribute to founding member and former president, the late Larry Schlack.

This year’s Schoolhouse of the Year Award was presented to Cook School, in Grosse Pointe Woods. John Parthum received the award on behalf of the Grosse Pointe Woods Historical Commission.

We have renamed the William Winglar Award to include the name of our dear late member, Larry Schlack. ( see Spring 2019 Slate) In addition, an informative program was presented by Claudia Throop. She modeled a method of researching one-room school history. Participants were encouraged to share their one-room school stories. Several members are in the process of restoring schools. The opportunity to network is always one of the benefits of attendance.

The day concluded with a tour of Brown School and the Bernard Historical Museum and site which included 8 historic buildings. For many, the highlight of the day was a visit to the Doster School, in Plainwell, which is now the “get away” home of member, Jill Marcusse. The architect showed sensitivity in designing a dwelling space while keeping the integrity of the school.

## *Review: “How to Research Your School”*

*By Jill Marcusse*

Claudia Throop’s enthusiasm for historical sleuthing propelled her presentation “How to Research Your School and More” at last spring’s MORSA Conference. Those in attendance became as geeked with the possibilities of research as she is.

In researching the history of your schoolhouse, after the MIORSA website is consulted, the next step Throop suggested is to check early 1870s County Plat Maps. These show where the schoolhouses were located and the names of the surrounding landholders. These names can be researched in [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org) or on other web sites.

Look into historical books as the next source. An on-line search will reveal the pertinent volumes, i.e.: history of Barry County. Recent publications, such as

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*Claudia Throop presents*

## *How to Research Your School?*

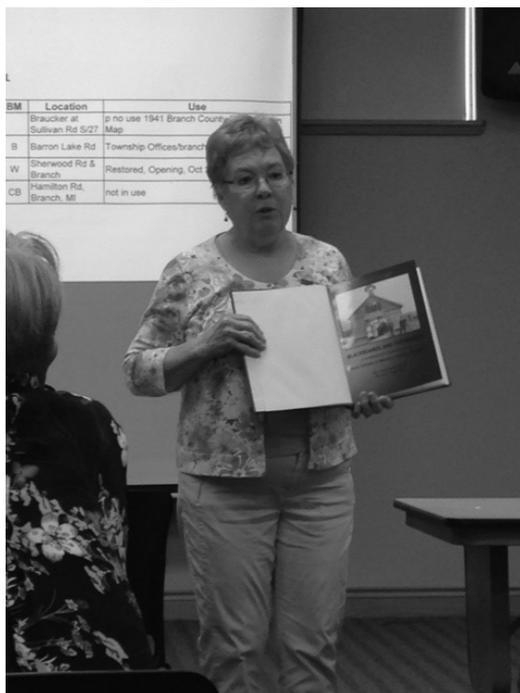
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“One-Room Country Schools of Allegan County” compiled with tech savvy and first-hand knowledge of the area, are the next place to consult.

Postcards were popular to commemorate each year’s country schools’ class. Throop finds these on EBAY and in antique shops. Many have identifying information on the plaque above the door giving the township name and district number.

On-line genealogy sites (such as genealogy-bank.com), and findagrave.com are two more sources of information. Throop also recommended community newspapers and their ‘local happenings’ section.

Last but not least, don’t forget the local historical societies. In her conference handout, Throop closed by writing, “Introduce them to MIORSA . Swap information and pictures.”



*Linda Jones Hull shows her book, co-authored with Mariann Tindle Hahn, “Blackboards and Outhouses; A compilation of information about Rural Schools in Mecosta County, Michigan.”*

## *What Brings You Here?*

*By Jill Marcusse*

“What brought you here today?” is proving to be one of the best parts of the annual MORSA Conference. First asked by Chair Tom Johnson at the 2018 Williamston Conference, we go around the room and all are invited to share their connections, dreams and remembrances of one-room schools.

- One couple told of the progress slowly being made in their renovation. Another woman spoke of her dream of a woman-cave to retreat to.
- Two new members, Dave Thompson and Keith Behm, said a few words about the book they were nearing completion on, “One-Room Country Schools of Allegan County” and the community’s response and help in bringing it about.
- Linda Jones Hull showed her book, co-authored with Mariann Tindle Hahn, “Blackboards and Outhouses; A compilation of information about Rural Schools in Mecosta County, Michigan.” Hull spoke of the years it had taken to research and write. Meticulously put together, it contains 119 schools with both historical and present day pictures. Each township’s schools are located on the township plat map and the teacher’s names and years of service listed. The book’s introduction closes with this line which summarizes what we experience as a group at MORSA. “We’ve enhanced our lives and friendship and hope this volume will enrich yours.”

## MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

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to obtain funds from Rosenwald or the Rosenwald foundation the buy-in of African American communities as well as continuing support of the new school by the responsible white governing bodies was necessary. African American communities raised more than 4.7 million dollars in order to aid in the construction plus they often donated land and labor. Rosenwald monies during this period equaled 28 million dollars. There were 663,615 African American students educated during this period.

What a wonderful legacy left by Julius Rosenthal working with Booker T. Washington!

Julius Rosenthal died in 1932.

### **Schoolhouse Association**

2019/2020

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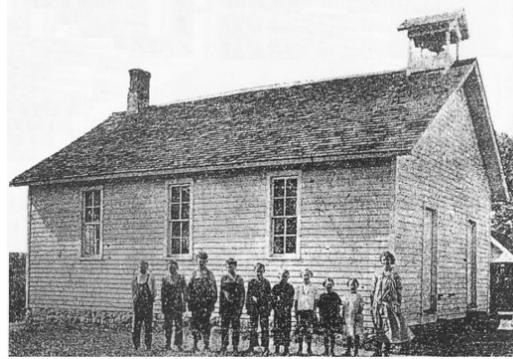
\$20 Senior (62+) or Student

\$25 Member,

\$25 Organizations

Website Address:

<<http://www.miorsa.org>



The first school of **Exeter township** was built around 1876 just East of Sumpter road. It collapsed just nine years later. A new school was built on the south corner of Stout and Sumpter Roads about 1888. **McGowan School** was named after the family who owned the property where the school was built. In fact, the first teacher to teach at the school was Mrs. Agnes B. McGowan. The school closed in 1966 and was consolidated into the Airport Community School District.

The one room school sat empty for many years and was generously donated to the Exeter Historical Society in 2002. The historical society decided that the school was worth saving and in 2003 was able to raise the funds to relocate the school four miles to its present home behind the Exeter Township offices in **Scofield**.

*Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association*

*c/o Tom M. Johnson*

*4815 Barton Rd.*

*Williamston, MI 488895*