

4.

EDUCATION BEGAN IN A ONE ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL IN MICHIGAN

Serving as Acting Governor of Michigan before he was 21, Stevens T. Mason, in his address at the convening of the Territorial Council in 1832, encouraged the members to consider legislation in support of education for the citizens of the Territory of Michigan. Laws passed almost a quarter century earlier had not been implemented. Even in Detroit, the few schools in existence were only for the privileged who could afford to give their children only the basic education available. Not until 1842 was there free public education in Michigan.

Devoutly believing an educated public was absolutely necessary to ensure good government, Mason's fortunate selection of John D. Pierce of Marshall, as Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1836, gave Mason much support in his goal of education for all. Great personal sacrifice and diligent inquiry into school systems in the east enabled Pierce to provide not only instructional guides but also detailed directions on how a one room school should be built in each primary school district: temperature, stove, placement of windows, furniture, water supply (bucket and dipper) and separate sanitary facilities for the sexes were included.

Oak Grove, Lyon, Bethel, Bird, Bitten...all are names of one room country school houses in Brighton Township. The latter four received their names from the property owners on whose land the school was built. All were built prior to 1875 except for Bethel, which was built prior to 1895. (Altho School Lake was listed in 1875.) Oak Grove has been torn down. Lyon has been given to the Society for restoration. Bethel has reverted to the owner of the church campgrounds on whose property it was built. Bird is a private home and Bitten is now a dental office. This writer is familiar with the Brighton Township schools since that is where she was raised.

Genoa Township presents somewhat of a problem regarding identification. In 1875, eight schools were in existence. On the NE corner of Kellogg and Grand River is a church which was the Kellogg School. The Baetcke School on the SW corner of Bauer and Challis Road, is now a house. For a while Beurmann School, on the S side of Brighton Road, E of Clifford Road, was used as a private school.

The school which stood at the NE corner of Latson and Grand River burned some time ago. The NW corner of Beck and Chilson Roads, is the site of another school. There is a house on that location now. Was the school used as a basis for the house or torn down to make room? What were the names of these two?

The Atlas shows a school on the SW corner of Golf Club and Kellogg. Also one on the SW corner of Richardson and Coon Lake Rd. On the N side of Crooked Lake Road, E of Nixon (formerly Latson Road) is a very delapidated, rundown structure, used to store hay, etc., which is shown as a school site. The names of these and their conditions we don't know. (Compiled from Livingston County Atlas, 1875, 1895, 1915 and "Bright Michigan Morning" by Harlan C. Hagman.)

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