

The Slate

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Fall 2024

The Principal's Office
Rochelle Balkam, President

An "Uncommon Common Man"

Those were the words of Jane Johnson, Tom Johnson's wife. I would change the order, "A Common Uncommon Man." I have met few people in life who fit that title more perfectly. Tom lived multiple existences: doctor, husband, father, grandfather, collector, restorer, mentor, historian. He was genuinely interested in people; listening, sharing and making new friends. It was Tom's idea to have each conference attendee share their interest in one-room schools. Everyone loves it!

Tom honored the Michigan One-room Schoolhouse Association as its president for 12 years. He assumed the president's role in 2010, at a time when membership and interest were in decline. During his term in office, membership increased dramatically as did our financial situation. The greatest contribution was the creation of our new website miorsa.org. For the first



Dr. Tom M. Johnson
January 16, 1935-May 10, 2024

time, we were able to make our extensive archives accessible. Networking has had a positive effect.

Tom was so proud of the restoration of the Branch one-room school in Ingham County. He piloted the project with the involvement of community members, retirees and skilled craftsmen. A full description of the project can be found in the fall 2010 issue of The Slate. The culmination of their effort was receiving the annual schoolhouse of the year award in 2015. The award this year will be named in honor of Tom Johnson.



Tom Johnson
Chair of MORSA 2010-2022

Age didn't seem to bother Tom too much. Not in himself or in others. In things—he loved age.

Cars, farmhouses, and especially one-room schoolhouses. He fixed them up, returning them to their glory days.

Tom found pleasure in being in them. He tuned into the spirit they contained. Tom wanted others to be aware of what lessons could be learned from the past. He was a great educator throughout his life. A mentor to many.

His enthusiasm was igniting. His leadership steady and sure. Tom and his wife Jane have given incredible time, energy and talents to MORSA. I'm so glad they have been part of my life. Thank you!

By Jill Marcusse

We are always on the lookout for new people with an interest in one-room schools to join us on the board. If you are interested email or call, or better yet talk to us at the Fall Conference! October 5th, Vandalia

GRANT OPPORTUNITY:

The Country School Association of America (CSAA) Innovative Instruction Grant offers start-up support for the delivery of inventive PreK-12 and/or adult learning programs developed by country school organizations and/or individuals. Successful applications that articulate how the proposed instructional program will address best practices or new trends in curriculum, museum education, and/or public history and its benefit to a target group of learners will be preferred. This award is focused on supporting the implementation of instruction including the materials, resources, and needs in order to successfully pilot and sustain a program. Members of CSAA are eligible to apply for this grant and are encouraged to visit the website for more information and the on-line application [https://](https://www.countryschoolassociation.org/innovative-instruction-grant.html)

www.countryschoolassociation.org/innovative-instruction-grant.html

Note: membership is available at [https://](https://www.countryschoolassociation.org/join-us.html)

www.countryschoolassociation.org/join-us.html .

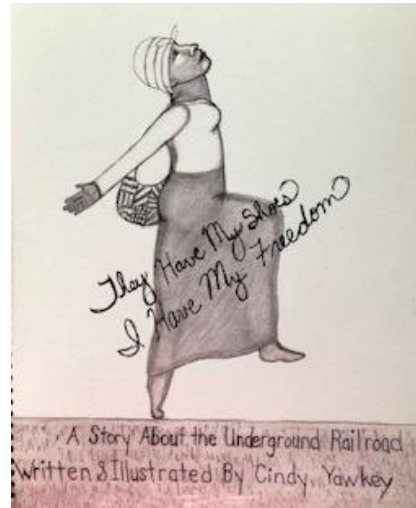
MORSA
Schoolhouse of the Year
2024 Award
will be presented at
the Annual Conference on
October 5th
by President Rochelle Balkam



Excerpt from the award winning book, ***“They Have My Shoes I Have My Freedom”*** published by the ***Underground Railroad Society of Cass County*** By **Cindy Yawkey**

The conductor seemed to be moving at a slower pace. I thought something was wrong. The floor boards opened. The conductor said, “You can ride on top, you’re in Michigan.” We climbed in the wagon. The conductor would tell us about the people and places.

He said. “We’re in Calvin Township. Many freed black families and slaves live here. They’ll help you.” We passed Mount Zion Church and Chain Lake Baptist Church. “This is Ramptown, James Bonine divided the land, five and ten acre lots. Slaves and free blacks could work the land, save their money, buy their own farms. Children could go to school.



He pointed up ahead and said, “Do you see the white carriage house?”
“Yes,” I said.
“That’s the next stop.”



We moved closer, a welcoming sight, a light in the window of the Bonine house. When I was getting out of the wagon, I heard somebody say, “Where’s your shoes at?”

“They Have My Shoes, I Have My Freedom,” I said.

*Experience these places at
MORSA Annual Conference
October 5th*

Accommodations for Fall Conference

Vandalia and Cassopolis, Michigan

Two unique accommodations in rural Cass County! Both family owned and operated—and just minutes from the Bonine House:

**Stutzman Family, Creekside Cabins, Vandalia, Michigan*

<https://creeksidecabinnns.com>

**Eby Family Sanctuary at Eby Farms, Cassopolis, MI*

<https://www.ebyfarmslc.com/the-sanctuary.html>

Niles, Michigan When our out-of-town relatives visit, they stay at these hotels in Niles. Both are within 30 minutes of the Bonine House. Major road work in the area should be wrapping up by October 5.

**Holiday Inn Express, Niles MI* Google [Holiday Inn Express Niles MI](#)

**Hampton Inn, Niles MI* Google [Hampton Inn Niles MI](#)

Elkhart, Indiana

Beautifully restored to its jazz age grandeur, the **Hotel Elkhart offers luxury, history, and fine dining in downtown Elkhart, www.hoteleskhart.com*

You will also find all of the major chain hotels in the Elkhart area, several on the north side near the toll road exchange on Cassopolis Street, and all approximately 30 minutes from the Bonine House.

Of the chains, the **Tru by Hilton stands out with prices comparable to the others. [Google Tru by Hilton Elkhart](#)*

Mishawaka & South Bend , Indiana

Mishawaka and South Bend also boast a host of the chain hotels, many within 30 minutes of Bonine House. Luckily, Notre Dame University does not have a home game on October 5! If you are looking to relax after the conference and enjoy a

beautiful fall weekend in the Michiana area, take a peek at South Bend's gorgeous historic Oliver Inn.



Accommodations info provided by Jennifer Ray, Friends of Brownsville School

Agenda of Fall Conference October 5th

Registration 9:00-9:30

9:40-9:50 President's Welcome

10:00-10:30 Welcome to the

Bonine House, **URSCC Tour**

10:40-12:00 **Oral History**

Presentation James Cameron

12:15-1:15 Lunch, time for sharing one-room school stories.

1:20-1:40 Short Meeting,

Schoolhouse of the Year Award,

Tribute to Tom Johnson

1:45-3:00 Tour of Carriage

house,

Story of Freedom Seekers,

Brownsville One-Room School site

3:10 Silent Auction ends

3:15 Optional Tour of Bogue

House, Site of the "Kentucky Raid" 1847

www.urscc.org for Underground Railroad Society's site driving map

Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association
Fall Conference
Saturday, October 5, 2024
9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association joins
The Underground Railroad Society of Cass County

The conference will be held at the **James E. Bonine House**, 18970 M-60, Vandalia, 49095 Cass County. **James Cameron**, Michigan Oral History Association, will be the speaker. Cameron has worked with the Friends of the Brownsville School and URSCC preparing volunteers for interviews with former students of Cass County's Integrated one-room schools. A documentary will be made to be shown in the Brownsville #1 School that is in the process of being restored.

We will visit this **Brownsville #1 One-Room Schoolhouse**, one of Michigan's first integrated schools. Tours of the Bonine House, home of Quaker abolitionists, James and Sarah Bonine, and its Carriage House across the road, used to house Freedom Seekers, are filled with history. An optional tour of the neighboring Bogue House, site of the Kentucky Slave Raid of 1847, will also be available.

More information at urscc.org or miorsa.org. *The Slate* newsletter Fall 2023, has a great article on the Brownsville #1 School. **Don't miss this conference!**

The program will include time for members to share their stories and network. A Silent Auction will be held, providing attendees an opportunity to bid on school related items. Items for the auction are welcome. Thank you!

Registration Form

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration Fee is \$35 and includes lunch. Reply by September 25

Please make check payable to MORSA and mail to:

Jane S. Johnson, 4815 Barton Road, Williamston, MI 48895

**Interview with Ruth Hoffman
Centenarian and One Room School**

Teacher

By Lyn Farquhar

Ruth Hoffman taught at three schools in northern Michigan; Maplewoods School, Crusherville School & the Cement Plant School. These schools were located in Emmet County and Resort Township. There were four schools in the Township that would go together to purchase supplies. She remembered the purchase of a set of encyclopedias for the children. All the one-room schools in the Township were consolidated in 1965 after which the children were bussed into the city.

Ruth graduated from high school in 1941 and started teaching at the age of 17 ½. Her mother was also a one-room schoolhouse teacher (1919-1929) and taught at one of these schools. When her mother was the teacher, Ruth would ride to school with her mom and then walk home. Ruth remembers particularly the excitement of the Christmas programs. Her mother played piano and supplied the music for the programs.

During the Depression, there was an abundance of government surplus food, especially canned goods. In Ruth's school there was a back room they used as a kitchen and all the government foods were stored there and used to cook lunches for the children who lived too far away from the school to go home for lunch. Among the products were powdered orange juice and canned prunes. The local farm families, including Ruth's (whose family were potato farmers), brought produce to the school to add to the soup that was prepared for the kids. They had a kerosene stove and after lunch the girls (never the boys) did up the dishes.

When Ruth was teaching at the Cement Plant School, the fathers who worked at the Plant were normally laid off during the Christmas season. Someone from the Plant would come to the school and take the kids,

whose fathers weren't working, to the store in town and bought them new coats, mittens, scarves, boots, etc. Ruth remembers looking at all the new clothes and feeling jealous. She was farm child and so had only hand-me-downs. She remembered that there were tours of the cement plant during which the visitors could go down into the quarry on train cars.

Although little formal education was required for teachers at that time, after teaching for several years, Ruth went to Central Michigan for two years and went on to teach at three other schools in southeast Michigan. When she returned to Petoskey, she married and had two children. It is unlikely she would have been allowed to teach after she married. When her first husband died in 1955, she returned to college and got her four year degree. Ruth is my son-in-law's great aunt and was married to two of his great uncles. She married the second after her first husband died.

When Ruth turned 100, there was a large family birthday party for her. About eight years ago, a reunion of one room schoolhouse teachers was assembled. Fifty people attended, both students and teachers. Ruth was honored with a gift of roses. She was the last living teacher for one of the schools in the township.

Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2024 Dues
Calendar Year

_____ \$25 Member
_____ \$20 Senior or Student
_____ Donation (Thank you)
_____ **Total**

Name of Member: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____

Email: _____

Please make check payable to MORSA and mail to:

Jane S. Johnson, 4815 Barton Road, Williamston, MI 48895

MORSA Members Participate in 2024 CSAA Conference in Toledo

by *Myrna Grove*

MORSA was well represented at this year's County School Association of America annual conference. The event took place at the University of Toledo's Performing Arts Center June 9-12. Attending were MORSA board members Rochelle Balkam, Jill Marcusse, and Myrna Grove along with Jennifer Ray, award recipient, and Jackie Freeman, docent at Onsted's Wooden Old Stone School.

Current MORSA President Rochelle Balkam shared her presentation, "Primers, Primers, Chalk and Bells: Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association". She explained the beginnings of MORSA when the Geddes Town Hall School was moved to Eastern Michigan University's campus. Rochelle's 50-year background as a history instructor has enhanced her research.

She showed dozens of former one-room schools in Michigan that now serve as museums, homes, commercial enterprises, restaurants, and wineries. Michigan has one of the largest number of one-room schoolhouses still standing. Twelve of those schools are still functioning as public schools.

Myrna Grove, both a CSAA and a MORSA board member, spoke on the topic, "The Schoolhouse Paintings of P. Buckley Moss", particularly those in the Midwest. Myrna is a retired educator of 35 years from Northwest Ohio. She has taught one-room school reenactments with students, is a trained Moss docent, and among her books is "Legacy of One-Room Schools".

Jennifer Ray attended the conference to formally receive this year's CSAA Preservation Grant. She represented the ca 1840 Brownsville School in Cassopolis which was integrated as early as 1850. The school was an important link in Michigan's Under-

ground Railroad. The school and area landmarks will be the site of this fall's MORSA conference on Saturday, October 5.

Jackie Freeman is a docent at the 1850 Wooden Old Stone School in Onsted, the site of MORSA's 2023 conference. She is author of eight books and seeks ways to network with others regarding one-room schools, as she develops curriculum for her school.

The final day of the conference featured a bus tour of six area one-room schools in Ohio and Michigan. The three schools toured in Michigan were Banner Oak School (1871-1921) in Temperance, Wooden Stone School ((1850-1955) in Onsted, and Victorsville School (1860-1960s) in Blissfield. The tour group ate lunch at Olde Schoolhouse Lunch Restaurant in Lambertville.

Next year's national CSAA Conference is scheduled June 8-11, 2025 at Marshall University in Huntington, WV. Registration begins in the spring.



Myrna Grove in the middle, CSAA

Interested in preserving the one-room schoolhouse legacy ?

Join the MORSA board!

We meet mostly via Zoom.

<p>Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association <u>2024 Officers:</u> Rochelle Balkam, Chair & Membership Jane S. Johnson Treasurer & Secretary <u>Board Members:</u> Marie Charnley Dr. Lyn Farquhar Myrna Grove Dr. Thomas Gwaltney Jill Marcusse Judy Shehigian Claudia Throop, Consultant Suzanne Daniel, Emeritus <u>The Slate Newsletter:</u> Jill Marcusse, Editor jjmarcusse@att.net</p> <p>Website: http://www.miorsa.org</p> <p>Facebook:michiganoneroomschoolhouseassociation.com</p>	<p><i>Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association</i> <i>c/o Jane Johnson</i> <i>4815 Barton Rd.</i> <i>Williamston, MI 48895</i></p>
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NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION
The date is October 5, 2024
Vandalia & Cassopolis

Starting at the Bonine House, home of Quaker abolitionists James and Sarah Bonine, who sheltered Freedom Seekers in their Carriage House across the road, then traveling to Brownsville #1 School which is undergoing renovation, this is a conference you don't want to miss!



Bonine House & Carriage House
M-60 & Penn Road,
Vandalia

Brownsville #1 School
20447 Osborn Street
Cassopolis

**Underground Railroad Society
of Cass County www.urscc.org**

