

The Slate

Vol. XXX Issue I

Spring 2022

Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association's 2022 Fall Conference

Mark your calendars!

October 1, 2022

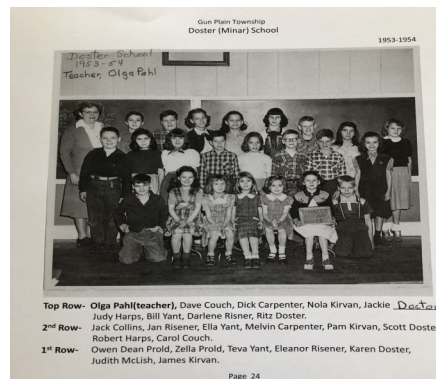
Allegan County Historical Society will host our conference at the Jewett School in the John Pahl Village at the Allegan County Fairgrounds.

The Jewett School, built in 1873 (known as the Brownell School at that time) was used until 1966, when it closed in consolidation with the Allegan School District. Students were bussed to schools not within walking distance, for the first time in almost a hundred years.



In 1971 the Jewett School (minus its' bell tower) was trucked to the Allegan County Fairgrounds to join the Old Township Hall, the Farmers' Museum, a doctor's office, and a caboose, among other interesting buildings . The school holds class for area school age kids during the fair and during the year.

The Allegan Co. Historical Society has many involved members, Bette and Dave Thompson and Keith Behm at the top of the list. Thompson and Behm put together a wonderful pictorial book "One-Room Country Schools of Allegan County". They have also authored several books by townships in the county.



Columbian School, “One room School Building a Disgrace”

By Rochelle Balkam

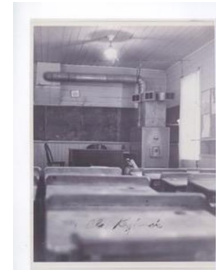
Sometimes information comes from unexpected sources. An example of that was a cryptic email I received from Robert Kisken. He had not remembered that we met over 50 years ago through a mutual friend. He was searching for some type of one-room school source and he found MORSA online.

Bob had a rather unique experience as a uncertified teacher who found his first job at the Columbian one-room school in Monroe County for the 1960-1961 school year. It was not considered to be a sought-after job because the students were mostly poor, and the school didn't even have running water.



The school was unusual in that the 8th grade students graduated with all other 8th graders in the county, but it was the only school that had African American graduates because nearly half of the students were African American.

The closing of the school was controversial. Bob writes the following, “The Ann Arbor News got involved and in March of 1961, ran an article



entitled, ‘Rural teacher terms himself unqualified and one-room school building a disgrace.’”

The University of Michigan School Services came up with a proposal. The current board members would resign, and a new board would be elected in its place. The school board did resign but no one could be found to run for the board, so the school was closed, and it was annexed to the Milan School District after the Monroe County officials said they couldn't run the school.

It was, indeed, shocking that the condition of the school had deteriorated to such an extent with so little attention before the newspaper article was written. The school closed its doors in the early 1960s.

Bob says he received word that a family bought the school for a dwelling, but it later burned. There is hardly any trace of the Columbian School to be found, perhaps only in the memories of those who attended and those who taught there.

Sources: *Ann Arbor News*, March 16, 1961
Robert Kisken - *Memories of a One-room School teacher*



The Chair's Column

Dr. Tom Johnson

I thought I knew Sue Daniels, but the more I learn, I realize that I really didn't.

For this Slate I want to pay homage to one of our original board members, Sue Daniel. In 1983 she was at Eastern Michigan University when our organization was founded. Today, sadly she is in memory care at Fox Run, a retirement community in Novi.

Suzanne was born in Plymouth, MI and was in grade school there until her family moved to Livonia. She then followed a family tradition and attended Miami University of Ohio. I thought that perhaps it was there where she developed her love of history, and especially that of one room schoolhouses. At Miami University there was a strong historic presence of Professor William McGuffey whose graded readers were used by a majority of early one room schoolhouses well into the 1900s. They are still available online.

After graduation, Suzanne taught. Her major had been home economics and she taught that in rural Ohio. She found this unsatisfying, so she returned to Michigan and first taught in Southfield. She then taught in Livonia and by this time she was teaching the 2nd grade. While teaching full time, she went to school to get a degree in library science. She was then hired as a librarian in Livonia and

given responsibility for the media at the Eisenhower School. She had always been interested in history which was supported by her interactions with her older brother who was a history professor at Ohio University. She was an early member of both the Livonia Historical Society and the Livonia Historical Commission, of which she was president for many years. The Commission which reports to The City of Livonia purchased two historic houses in order to save them from the construction of I-96. They were moved to land that the city had bought at Seven Mile and Farmington Road, named Quaker Acres. However, because of the city's plan to put a major shopping center on the same site, Suzanne, working with others on the historical commission and the historical society convinced the city to purchase the Hill Farm which was at the corner of Eight Mile and Newburgh Rd.

This has now become Greenmead, which is Livonia's outstanding historical park. After Sue retired she volunteered at Greenmead almost full time, but as a volunteer had the freedom to move about. In other efforts she took up the task of cataloguing all the one room schoolhouses that she could find in Michigan. The Michigan one Room Schoolhouse Association (MORSA) had begun identifying and cataloguing, but after two attempts, found it too taxing and dropped it. Sue ended up, after years, with 7,200 one room schools. These can now be found on MORSA's website, www.miorsa.org.
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Dixboro School Receives MORSA One-Room Schoolhouse of the Year 2021 Award

MORSA has been recognizing outstanding examples of one-room schools in the state for over a decade.

The 2021 recipient of the award was the Dixboro School in the village of Dixboro. The school is unique in that it is the centerpiece of the Village Green, typical in New England. The village was founded in 1824, by Captain John Dix, native of Massachusetts.

The award has been highlighted by the Washtenaw County Historical Society and several other local organizations. Increased interest has made it possible for the school committee to raise funds for further preservation, and renovation. The plans include the restoration of the early 20th century main entry and the addition of an handicap accessible bathroom.

Summer brings visitors from local communities for the Friday Farmers Market, music and an opportunity to enjoy pleasant evenings on the green.



Thanks to Tom Freeman for all his hard work at the Dixboro School.



Tom Freeman and Rochelle Balkam

*Check our website miora.org and Michigan One Room Schoolhouse Association facebook page for information on the 2022 Fall Conference in Allegan, and of course the next edition of *The Slate*.*

Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association
William Winglar One-Room Schoolhouse of the Year Award Application

Section 1— Ownership

Date _____

Schoolhouse Owner (s) Address _____

Name of School _____

Address of School _____

Nominated by/Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail _____

Section 2—The Schoolhouse

1. Date of construction and builder, if known: _____

2. Type of construction _____

3. Years used as a school _____

4. After closure, how was the building used? _____

5. Outline any structural/architectural changes from the original to present

Section 3—History of the School and its Restoration

1. Please write a short history of the schoolhouse, including any features that distinguish it from other schools. (Attach an extra sheet if necessary.)

2. Discuss the restoration of the schoolhouse and how it's used at present. Has it been moved from its original location? If so, to what location?

3. To which specific time period is the schoolhouse restored? _____

4. Please attach at least two interior and four exterior photos.

5. Is the building open to the public? Does it serve an educational function?

Please send the completed application to: Rochelle Balkam

222 Wildwood Ave.

Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Phone: 734-668-6294

Email: Balkamhp@gmail.com

Deadline is August 31, 2022

The award will be given only to schools that have not been converted to other uses, such as homes or places of business. These criteria have been adapted with permission from the Country School Association of America. Thank you.

Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association Together Again

by Jill Marcusse

After the pandemic pause of 2020, the Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association's (MORSA) Fall Conference 2021 in Brighton, MI was full of camaraderie, stories, and gratitude.

Presenters, Tim Bennet of Hicks School, and Jim Vichich, Brighton Area Historical Society's (BAHS) president, shared their one-room school projects, themed "Works in Progress",

Bennet told of the Hicks School's journey of twenty-one miles from Pickney to his family's Sesquicentennial Warner Homestead in Brighton. There were a few tense moments on the road, with the school just clearing the US23 overpass as the road's incline lead to a near miss with but an inch to spare.



Hicks School after the move

The Hicks School was a lovely place for our annual meeting. Bennet, an avocational archeologist and historian, had many interesting stories and objects. After lunch in the Warner Homestead House, members shared their one-room school projects and loves. From the Oldham sisters sharing their mother Alicia's poetry and art, to the Detroit area Northview Township Historic District Commission floor reconstruction; Dana Kenneth Johnson's ongoing books on MI schools by county; member's perennial search for new members and money—and the fun of having school kids today visit yesteryear's classrooms. Everyone was enthusiastic!

We then traveled down the road to the Lyon School, beautifully maintained by the Brighton Area Historical Society. Built in 1885, the Lyon School has had a central role in the community. Norma Jean Pless captivated her audience by tracing her school years there. When the school closed in 1955, and was consolidated into the city schools, Norma and the other students were thrust into a new environment. As the country kids, Norma said they sometimes felt like second-class students. But they knew they were smarter.



Norma Jean Pless and Jim Vichich

Norma went on to be a clerk at the former Lyon School as it was re-purposed into the Township Hall. She furthered being a champion of the building when a new township hall was built and there was talk of razing the Lyon School building. She was instrumental in BAHS buying it and raising the money to restore it into a barrier-free learning center.

Lyon School



(continued on page 7)

Together Again (continued from page 6)

Jim Vichich showed a short film on another of the Brighton Area Historical Society’s ongoing projects, the Headstone Restoration/Preservation at Brighton’s Old Village Cemetery. Now in its tenth year, it is amazing. I had to stop by to see it. What a great day!



Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2022 Dues

_____	\$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

Chair’s Column (continued from page 3)

Although she had catalogued the 7,200 schools, Sue said she was not finished with that project since she wanted to discover the schools in the Upper Peninsula that had been built for the logger’s children , to see if any of those schools had survived.

Another project that she was working on was to gather information on one room school furniture, especially desks, concentrating on those around the late 1800s and early 1900s. In her travels she would take pictures of desks and gather information about them. The results are quite complex and incomplete. We in MORSA didn’t know anything about this information being available. In her spare time, if she had any, she co-wrote a book called “Livonia Preserved: Greenmead and Beyond.” She was also instrumental in the formation of the Country School Association of America and is on their board and attended all meetings. Their initial meeting was held at her favorite place, Greenmead.

There is an old adage that says, “What you see, is what you get,” but in Suzanne’s case, you actually get much, much more. Her life it seems to me has been a mission to be productive. I am just amazed about the amount she has accomplished while she was working and after she retired. A person I talked to recently at Greenmead said, “Greenmead wouldn’t be here, if it hadn’t been for Suzanne.” All of her materials are being archived for posterity at Eastern Michigan University where MORSA began.

MORSA says, “Thank you, Suzanne” and we miss you greatly.

I must give thanks to Suzanne’s older sister, Barb Birmingham, and Gene Cramer, former President and now Vice-President of Livonia Historical Society for facts and insights regarding Suzanne’s career.

NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION

**Michigan One-Room
Schoolhouse Association**

2021 Officers:

Dr. Tom M. Johnson, Chair
Rochelle Balkam, Vice Chair
& Membership

Treasurer: Jane S. Johnson

Board Members:

Kathy Brundige
Marie Charnley
Dr. Lyn Farquhar
Tamara Gady
Myrna Grove
Dr. Thomas Gwaltney
Lauren Harris
Jill Marcusse
Judy Shehigian
Claudia Throop, Consultant
Suzanne Daniel, Emeritus

The Slate Newsletter:

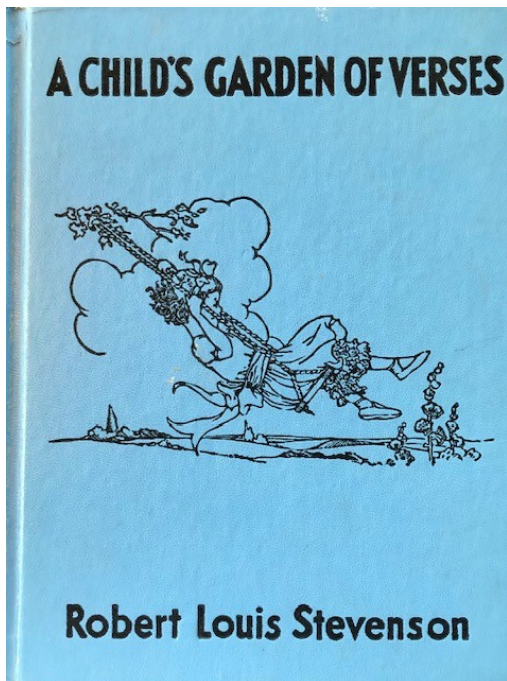
Jill Marcusse, Editor

Membership Dues:

\$20 Senior (62+) or Student
\$25 Member
\$25 Organizations

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

*Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association
c/o Tom M. Johnson
4815 Barton Rd.
Williamston, MI 48895*



The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown—
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

Robert Louis Stevenson