

# The Slate

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## ***If These Walls Could Talk Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Conference May 16, 2015***

*By Rochelle Balkam*

The 2015 conference will be held at the Stoney Creek School on the site of the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm in Rochester Hills. The school was built in 1848, replacing the original which was built in 1825.

Local children walked or rode to school, learning their lessons and passing that knowledge on to the next generation until the school closed in 1952, shortly after the new wing was added. The students became part of the Rochester Hills Community School District at that time. The restoration of the schoolhouse was a part of a Bicentennial project in 1976 and reopened in 1982 as a living history classroom.

Highlights of the conference include: A walking tour of the Van Hoosen Farm and his-

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## ***President's Column***

*By Tom M. Johnson*

For the past 25 years my wife Jane and I have had a Michigan State University (MSU) Friendship Student from a foreign country whom we see socially on at least a monthly basis. After having students from Japan, Cambodia, Korea, India and China our student this year is a delightful young woman, majoring in physics, from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Recently we attended "Malaysian Culture Night" put on by the MSU Malaysian Student Society. Following a cultural play (which was excellent) and a delicious dinner of traditional Malaysian food, we got talking about education in Malaysia and discovered that they have operating one room schools.

First a few facts about Malaysia. The country is located in southeast Asia and has a population of over 30 million. It has a successful economy; in fact, the GDP has been growing at 6.5% per annum for almost 50 years. It is a predominantly Muslim country with Islam as the state religion, but with freedom of religion for non-Muslims, mainly Hindus and Buddhists.

The one room schools are located on off shore islands and in remote villages. The curriculum is standardized as outlined by the government and yes, computers are provided. All teachers are college graduates. If a local qualified teacher is not available for the one room school, the government sends one in.

Required education in Malaysia ends after the sixth grade. Educational expenses are paid for by

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## ***If These Walls Could Talk***

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toric outbuildings, introduction to the Stoney Creek School Program, interactive digital timeline featuring photos, music and artifacts from each decade (1850-1950), the opportunity to learn from staff experts on a variety of topics and from one another.

Included in the day's events is the annual presentation of the William Winglar Award to the 2015 Schoolhouse of the Year. The luncheon speaker will share the story of the Van Hoosen Farms history. This is a unique venue with much to offer for all participants.

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### **Examples of Written Exercises**

*(Ray's New Practical Arithmetic—to be figured on slates or copybooks)*

1. January has 31 days; February, 28; March, 31; April 30 and May 31. How many days are there in these five months?
2. I bought 4 pieces of muslin; the first contained 50 yards, the second, 65 yards, the third, 42, and the fourth, 89. How many yards in all?
3. General Washington was born in the year 1732 and lived 67 years. In what year did he die?
4. A carriage cost \$137, and a horse \$65. How much more than the horse did the carriage cost?
5. A tree 75 feet high was broken; the part that fell was 37 feet long. How high was the stump?
6. America was discovered by Columbus in 1492. How many years had elapsed in 1837?
7. What will 15 oranges cost at 8 cents each?
8. How much will 5 pounds of coffee cost at 34 cents a pound?
9. A farmer bought 6 horses for \$75 each. How much did he pay for his horses?

*~from "Country School Copybook," (contributed by Myrna Grove)*

## ***President's Column***

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the government. We also learned that if a one room school student does very well in their elementary studies, they are eligible to sit for a qualifying examination. Students who pass the exam, may continue their education in a larger community, paid for, including room and board, by the government.

Students attending one room schools wear uniforms although there is some leeway given to students who have to walk long distances. Boys and girls are educated together as are Muslim students and students of the other religions.

As we know in the United States there are Amish one room schoolhouses and a smattering of operating one room schoolhouses in several states, including Michigan. How many do you suppose there are in the rest of the world?

I look forward to seeing you at our annual conference in May.

### **Elocution**

Elocution is the art of clear and correct public speaking, and in 19th century America it was considered extremely important. The teacher would write a rather difficult sentence on the board and then call on students to recite it. There were often competitions in which students would stand before the class and try to recite all the sentences clearly and crisply without making any errors. Today we would call these sentences "tongue-twisters."

1. Three gray geese sat on the green grass grazing.
2. She sells seashells on the seashore. The shells she sells are seashore shells I'm sure.
3. Cross crossings cautiously.
4. Round and round the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran.
5. The sixth sheik's sixth sheep is sick.

*(from "Country School Copybook," contributed by Myrna Grove)*

*Facebook page: Michigan One Room School Houses*

*By Cheryl Vatcher-Martin*

Creating a Facebook page relative to One Room School House history has brought plenty of historians and one room school house attendees together online. The tremendous growth of this page I attribute to the above mentioned individuals who have contributed their time, stories, and histories of their one room schools. Without their input I would have less information to share with everyone. It has been a blessing to continually learn and meet fellow researchers and historians online.

As I delve into further research myself, I do hope to compile a short book at some point in the future with memories of country school house attendees. Additionally I'd

***"Primers, Chalk and Bells"***

*By Rochelle Balkam*

This was the title of the presentation given on March 14 at the Historical Society of Michigan Local History conference in Sterling Heights. "Class" was called to order with an antique school bell. The audience had many stories to share about family members who had attended, taught in and live in one-room schools. One attendee shared a reading book that she had used in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in 1929. Another recalled having been in my mother-in-law's class in fourth grade. My mother-in-law taught in a one-room school in the 1940s in Southern Illinois, and taught here in Michigan from the 1950s-1980s. She celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 3/27. Teaching on Harsen's Island in a two-room school provided a new dimension from another teacher.

My father attended Miller School in Isabella County in the 1920s and his mother saved several of his drawings from that time. My grandfather bragged about being in the top four in his graduating class which in those days was grade eight. What he didn't share with his grandchildren was the fact that there were only 4 in his class.

It was a mutual learning experience and new contacts were made. We continue to reach out to those whose interests we share. The artifacts of early education were of great interest to the audience including McGuffy readers, a chalk board, book carrier, an ink well and my Dick and Jane primer from 1944.

love to include any student who also had the great fortune of educating another generation in either the school where they attended or a different one altogether. As an author/fine art photographer and researcher, I truly want to preserve as many memories of the history of the one room school houses and those who were educated therein. As time progresses, it is imperative that those who attended share their stories with at least their family and friends to keep that history alive. And as we all know, plenty of the country schools are literally part of the by gone era, never to be

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***Many of today's populace are unaware*** of how the school house meetings were conducted during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The actual school house board members mainly consisted of parents of the children who attended that particular one room school, and they may or may not have attained a complete education themselves. The following entry is from the Mt. Pleasant School in Romulus, Mi. and the board meeting date recorded was on Sep 1 1884.

At a meeting of school District 5 frac held at the school house the report of the Director was read and adopted James E Moore was elected assessor on the first ballot Voted to have 7 mounths school 4 mounths winter and 3 mounths summer Voted to let the contract for 7 cords of 2 foot wood to the loest bidder Daniel Rose took the job for 30 cents per cord

adjourned  
Gasper Moore  
Director

Settled with Daniel Rose assessor \$14.25 in his hand belonging to the District

Here is another short entry relative to a board meeting at the same school, Mt. Pleasant.

The anual meeting of school District No. 5 Fr of Romulus was held at the school house sep 14 1899 The meeting was called to order by the Moderator James E Moore was elected assessor for the term of three years Voted to have Seven Mounths School Voted to buy 10 cords of hard wood The contract was let to Robert Johnson at \$1.15 per cord Voted to buy a flag and raise a pole The balance in the assessor hands belonging to the District is \$43.81

meeting adjourned  
Gasper Moore  
Director

*~from "Facebook page..." by Cheryl Vatcher-Martin*

## The Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association

### *Facebook page: Michigan One Room School Houses*

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replaced. A recent example is the little red school house in Redford Township, Michigan.

It was unfortunate that the Redford One Room School House was demolished. That historic structure was one that the Board Members of MORSA fought for, as well as local Redford citizens and other officials who did not want to see the school house destroyed. As I was not involved with the Redford School House until it was about to be removed, I don't know how much more could have been done to protect this country school. Let's hope that with the loss of this historic school, it will fuel other preservationists to make sure that no more schools meet this fate that are in good shape, and can be utilized for programs, historical society archives, or as a business/home.

For those who'd like to access my Michigan One Room School Houses on Facebook, please do. You can check like and learn some history. I do have some of my fine art photography relative to Redford's school there as well before it was demolished.

There is another little red school house in Romulus, Mi., the District No. 1 School, circa 1839 where part of Romulus' historic archives are housed. You can usually find me either there or across the street in the historic Samuel Kingsley Home, circa 1855, procuring school house research and other historical research on Sunday afternoons between 1:00pm-4:00pm. I'd be happy to talk about the history there. As a docent I can give you a verbal tour of what is inside both buildings, and other information about the area.

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 Lewis Stevenson*

### **Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association 2015/2016**

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#### **The Slate Newsletter:**

*Hannah Geddes Wright, Editor*

#### **Membership Dues:**

*\$10 Senior (62+) or Student  
\$15 Individual, \$25 Organizations  
\$100 Life*

#### **Website Address:**

**<<http://www.one-roomschool.org>**

### **Michigan One-Room Schoolhouse Association**

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Livonia, MI 48152-1098  
Att: Suzanne Daniel

*"...fostering understanding and appreciation for one-room schoolhouses in Michigan"*