

TYRONE GLEANINGS

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Ione's Community News:

June is nearing the close and what a wonderful month it has been! The weather has been great, the strawberry season has been great as well. My husband, Bob, grows our strawberries- an old brand called Dunlaps. This is the old Michigan berry that I'm sure many of you will remember. To make a long story short- June has been a good month to live in Michigan. Ooh and sweet cherries are coming up.

Thank you to Amy Veenendall for cleaning some of the headstones at the Idlewild Cemetery. The junk from the trees attach to the headstone making them difficult to read. I know she would be happy if anyone with a little time would like to help her.

I am (and I hope you are) looking forward to Kent City Fall Festival on Saturday, September 12th. As usual, our Historical Society will have an open house from 9:30am-2:00pm. The library will be having a used book sale and some outdoor games. While you're there getting some books stop by our Museum for a visit, cup of coffee and cookies and take a look at all of the new exhibits that our team has been working on. Everyone is welcome – so mark the 12th of September on your calendars.

I do hope that you all enjoy the Block School history that Ed Morgan has gleaned for us. Enjoy the rest of the summer!



**Please mark your 2015 calendar for the following meetings at 1:00pm
July 14th, August 11th, Sept 8th**

Block School Memories from former students

Dee Kiel has memories of Mrs. Maugher- "she was the kindest teacher a kindergartner could have. She was also my dad's kindergarten teacher. I remember the *Pledge of Allegiance* every morning and often sang *America*. It was just how we started our day right after roll call. We sat with our feet flat on the floor and our backs against the chair back. Exercises included walking around the room with a book on our head. Lunch time was always preceded with prayer. I remember 'God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food. Amen'. I really don't recall any bad times. Just happy times. It was a good place to begin your life as an American. It was a place that you made many friends that have lasted a lifetime."

One incident that Dee recalled was probably done by many of you. "It was touching my tongue on the swing bar in January and telling my friend to try it. Not to be hurtful to her but to share the experience. Cheryl still remembers it too."

The "tongue incident" touched many of us. Ione's was on the giant stride pole in Northern Wisconsin. Terry Donat had a similar experience. Terry also said, "With Maude's direction, Dick & Jane taught me how to read. I will always remember her for setting me on the road to reading".

Ed Morgan remembers daring Rhonda Graham to put her tongue on the water pump that used to be in the front yard of the school and she was stuck. "A teacher poured water on it to get her off. I had to stay in noon hours for several days."

Gayla's 1st grade teacher at Block School was Mrs. Norquist. She had to walk to the elementary school in town to catch a ride on the Special Ed bus that dropped her off at school. She remembers standing in front of Mrs. Coalter's class to give her "testimony" regarding the incident where Wendy VandenHeuvel's finger was caught in the front door. A huge puddle would form in the front yard when it rained or snow melted and at recess kids would splash and play in it. Gayla participated in this activity and fell down in the middle wearing a "wool skirt". This caused her immense itching and irritation for the rest of the day!

The following highlights were taken from the **History of the Block School District** written by Grace (Bristol) Mauger. Grace wrote the history of Block School after she retired. A collection of photos of her, the students and the school were donated to the Historical Society by her nephew, Dale Darling, after her death.

Until 1852, the school district in which I taught for many years was an original forest, a connection link between the forest along the Flat River and the great Muskegon Belt.

Asa Clark, was born in New York 1820. He came to Michigan with his family in 1848 and settled in Ada for (3) years before migrating to Grand Rapids and penetrated the forest northeast from Sparta Center to Tyrone Township, Section 36. He purchased 116 acres along Rogue River for \$1.25/acre and built a cabin. He cleared 52 acres for farming. Many other settlers and their families moved into the community: Lyman Hoag, Charles Madison, Allen Cummings, W.T. Young, Josiah Richards, J.M. Adams, Samuel Worden Sr., & James Elmor.

Feeling the need of a school, Asa Clark, a member of the Board of School Inspectors notified a taxable inhabitant of School District No. 2 that they formed a Union School District No. 2 fractional on July 31, 1858. This is composed of section (1) and the east half of section (2) of Sparta Township and sections (25) & (26) and (35) & (36) and the east half of sections (27) & (34) of Tyrone Township. The first school meeting was held at the home of James C. Elmor and they decided in September to hold school the following spring term in a temporary building. The officers nominated were unanimously elected: Lyman Hoag, Director; Asa Clark, Moderator; E.G. Clark, Assessor. They hired Miss Alice Church, a qualified teacher, to teach the primary school for 17 weeks starting May 19, 1859 for \$1.00 per week.

School was held the first (3) terms in a lumber shanty located in the lower part of section (25). Miss Church had (17) pupils on the school roll. There were (3) terms in a year: winter, spring and summer. A schoolhouse was built for \$400 on the northwest corner of Section (36) where

Asa Clark leased ½ acre of his land for school purposes only. Charles Madison built the school commonly known as the Clark School. A tax was voted to defray the expenses of the building, necessary out-buildings, a stove and other necessary furnishings or equipment.



Other than Alice Church, Some of the faithful teachers in the early history of this school, who taught the three R's to our early pioneer children that they might have an education, should be brought to our remembrances: Mary Butler, Flora Darling, Victoria Stebbins, Sarah Clark, Marie Thurston, Rosina Madison, Rebecca Moore, Mary Creager and Sarah Blass. Mary Butler started the first term in the new school October 18, 1864 for \$39.00 for that term. The wages increased to \$65.00 for a 3-month term for Flora Darling.

About 1865 another pioneer, Mr. Chauncey Church Sr., and family moved into the district. His sons, Frank, entered school at 5 years old. I had my interview to get the early history of the district with Frank Church. He served as Treasurer on the School Board for 45 years. He was elected Township Road Commissioner in 1906 and during his term (3) miles of macadamized road was completed by 1910 and many miles of improved road followed which was a big help to the farmers. Mr. Church acquired \$7320 "State Reward" for the township and \$250 for every mile of first class road construction.

Allen Cummings built the hotel that was almost across from the schoolhouse and called it the "Block Tavern". It was on the improved road, a direct route from Saginaw through Cedar Springs to Muskegon. This was a growing community, 5 miles north of Sparta Center and 20 miles north of Grand Rapids. The district tried to get a Cedar Springs-Muskegon railroad, a post office and other builds to complete a village – but failed. The Block Tavern served as a hotel boarding house until it burned in 1880.

Jason S. Bradford bought Asa Clark's farm in 1896 and leased the second ½ acres to the school ground. At the annual school meeting 9/6/1899, the district decided that the (1) acre be used for school purposes, but for any reason not kept for school, the land was to be returned to the rightful owner – the school retaining the right to remove the buildings and other school equipment. The district also voted that the school be painted and the yard cleared and seeded. They also passed that the school be named "Black School" (although some yet call it Black Tavern School).



Mr. Hendrick Johnson bought the Asa Clark farm from Jason Bradford in 1899. His son, Andrew, remained on the farm for many years. Later 3rd generation Arthur Johnson took over and is currently owned by his son, David Johnson- 4th generation. The Johnson families attended Block School and served on the School Board.

Many other families settled in the district over the years including: Aftons, Roscos, Smiths, Andersons, Esthers, Dykstras, O'Neils, Carrs, Gunnesons, Blacks and others. They all took an active part in helping the school with Christmas programs, box socials, neighborhoods plays, PTA's, etc. The framed school building burned in January 1924 and at a special meeting the board met and voted to build a new school. They signed bonds and borrowed \$1800 from the Peoples State Bank in Sparta. School opened in the new building September 1924 with 35 scholars on the roll. I, Mrs. Maugher, taught my first year at Block 1926-1927. In 1940 the school membership dwindled to 14. The increase in enrollment began in 1944 when lots were sold along the highway. In September 1949 the school board converted the school into a 2-teacher system utilizing the basement but wasn't too satisfactory so it was voted to build a new 2-room school. September 1954, school began in the new cement block



building & about 3 years later a 3rd room was added. This became an enjoyable place for the teachers and about 75 children. In 1959 the district consolidated with Kent City. Some of the dedicated teachers at Block School were: Vera Hibbs, Dorothy Jacoby, Florence G. Anderson, Wilma Montgomery, Edna Peterson, Hazel Thompson, Roberta Reiley, Marian Klint, Marjory Beardsley, Agnes Patin, Maud Coalter, Edna Hyde, Edith Loomis, Ilah Lord, Elsie Ostrom, Mary Peterson, Max Bird, Barbara Lang, Marcia Salarski and Julie Broton.

Block School was closed and the children were taken into Kent City. The fruit growers began bringing migrant workers from the South and Block School was opened for a few years as a Nursery Center and pre-school for migrant children.

A very pleasing and necessary thing happened when the district learned that the Block School was to become the Kent County's Sheriff's Department's first substation. In 1978 Sheriff Heffron told his plan in a joint meeting to move deputies closer to the need, the county's sparsely patrolled areas north and east. This would reduce officer's travel to and from their patrol areas. In 1979 the Sheriff's Dept. obtained a lease from the Kent City School Board for (10) years and an option for renewing. Remodeling began in June of 1979 and they held an Open House December 12, 1979. As you meet Lt. Eli Roberts, he states, "we are pretty well accepted and as we are a taxpayer's supported agency, we want the people to feel we are their agency."



September 12th- Kent City Fall Festival w/ many activities for the whole family. See you there!