

September

Gaining Knowledge - History of Southwold Schools



In Upper Canada, many rural common schools built during the 19th century up to the 1860s were made of logs, and provided a basic education free to all children. This small log school house in Upper Canada Village is a representation of such structures.

“The essential function of the common school is the faithful development of character and executive habits in the child.”

— from Pioneer Schools of Upper Canada
by Frank Eames, 1917

Before Southwold Township was incorporated in 1850 schools already existed here in Upper Canada. Early public schools in Ontario were established through provincial legislation starting in 1807. The Public Schools Act of 1807 appointed teachers and trustees, while the Common Schools Act of 1816 allowed local communities to establish schools and elect trustees.

The first known school in Southwold Township was a log structure at Watson's Corners in 1816. It was built on land donated by James Watson, one of Colonel Talbot's early settlers.

Memories – The One Room School Years in Southwold

For almost 120 years, since the early days of Southwold Township, many of the elementary-aged children were educated in one-room schoolhouses. Those schoolhouses were often closely tied to the local community, be that a village, hamlet or crossroads, where a business, community hall or church might also be located. While frequently one room structures, some of the larger villages may have had a two room schoolhouse. Schools were commonly named for example as S. S. # 7 Paynes Mills, with S. S. standing for school section. A number of Southwold graduates from these one room schools were asked to share some of their personal memories.

Walking to school in the 1940s girls wore snow pants beneath their dresses and removed them when they arrived at school. On the walk everyone threw snowballs at their friends and all arrived with wet mittens. One school had a large round furnace at the back of the room where all the mittens were hung around the furnace to dry. One student can still smell the odour of wet wool to this day!



In the same era there was no indoor plumbing. Drinking water was carried in from the well and poured into a crock-like vessel, and hanging from the side was a dipper with a large curved handle. The students each dipped out the water and drank from the dipper. One student recalls that if the kid before them was someone they didn't care for, they would turn the dipper and drink from it left-handed. All very sanitary!

Many recall the lifelong friendships that blossomed from knowing everyone in your school, and from the school being one of the focal points of their community. School started at Grade 1, with

Kindergarten beginning in 1969 when the one room schools closed, and all children were bussed to the township's expanded Southwold Public school.

The day began with the singing of God Save The King, and later God Save The Queen, with recitation of The Lord's Prayer following. Teachers often relied on older students to help with younger students, such as listening to and helping them with reading. It is likely that some students were influenced by this experience to pursue their own teaching career.

Everyone went outside for recess; not because they had to but because they wanted to. There was always a scrub baseball game for the older children. The girls played with hula hoops and skipping ropes and there were swings and maybe a monkey bar to play on. Kids played games like red rover, and rhymes with a rubber ball like Annie Annie over. One student recalls a big argument in the school yard and someone yelling "heads up" and when they looked up the handle of a thrown broom caught them in the eyebrow producing their first black eye!

Lunch time was usually at the school unless you were in a village such as Shedden where most children went home for lunch. One day at Shedden the teacher had to run home for something but there was no one to watch the few children who stayed for lunch. So they all piled into the teacher's car and went with her to her home some miles away, and the children played in her yard while she went inside. Certainly couldn't do that these days. At lunch hour some students would run down the street in Shedden to the variety store and buy penny candies. The storekeeper would give them a little brown bag to hold and they would take forever to spend their nickels. But alas, children going to school hungry is not a new phenomenon. As recalled by one student their sister was threatened by an older boy to give him her lunch or he would beat her up. At this school the teacher kept a pot of Lipton soup on a hot plate and all were welcome to have it.

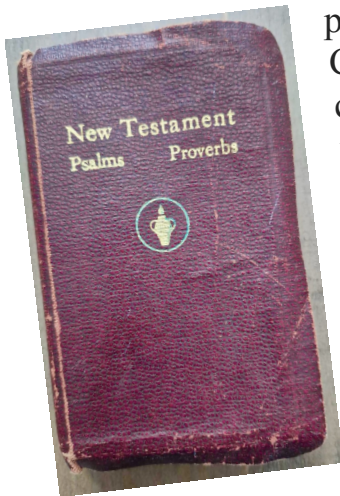
Special occasions were marked throughout the year. At Halloween hijinks might prevail with older boys carrying an outhouse of the lady next door up on top of the school. The next day the teacher would tell those boys to go up and put it where it belonged! Halloween parties were common as were parties for Valentines Day. Christmas concerts were an annual tradition with all grades participating. The concerts were often held at the local community hall or church where a stage and curtains made everything seem so professional. School work may have been done at the hall or church while also rehearsing for the concert. On Arbour day in May the school would clean up



the school yard and as one student recalled they would then walk down through a local bush to a farmer's yard for a cold drink of water from their hand pump. Baseball in the springtime often meant a mother or two loading the team into their cars to travel to another Southwold school for a game. There was always a friendly baseball rivalry between schools and communities.

Music was also part of the curriculum, and for some schools where the teacher was not musically inclined, this meant a music teacher visiting the school throughout the year. In the spring some school choirs would participate in the Rotary Music Festival in St. Thomas. One student recalls the older boys at their school filling the inside of the piano with paper so the visiting music teacher couldn't play it. The students thought it was funny, but the teacher not so much.

The small school library was supplemented with books from the Elgin County Library Bookmobile, which would make a stop at the school throughout the year. It was exciting to be one of the students chosen to pick out books to be borrowed to supplement the school's small selection.



Volunteers from the Elgin Area Bible Club visited the schools and presented Bible stories on a flannel board to at that time, a mostly Christian school population. They would also hold area competitions with things such as sword drills, where a Bible verse was called out and the first person to find that in their Bible, the sword, and read it was the winner of that round. The Gideons would come to the schools once a year and presented every grade five student with their own New Testament.

The strap was in use during the one room school days with one student recalling that when the teacher used the strap on the boy that sat in front of them, they also were scared that this big strap would hit them too.

Special trips were held at year end with one person recalling their trip in grade eight to the Greenfield Village and Henry Ford museum in Dearborn Michigan. It was a big outing, and three young boys got lost while touring the village. The rest of the students had to get on the bus while two teachers and parents searched for them. They were found, but the students never got to go in the Museum! Another special school trip was a tour of the new Ford Motor Plant when it opened. To raise money for these trips mothers might hold games nights with lots of interesting games and a fantastic lunch afterwards. The end of the school year may

have included a picnic in the backyard of the school, and congratulations to the graduates.

Participating in Shedden Fair is something that most schools did by sending in their best scholastic entries for judging, and marching along the racetrack on fair day carrying a school banner.

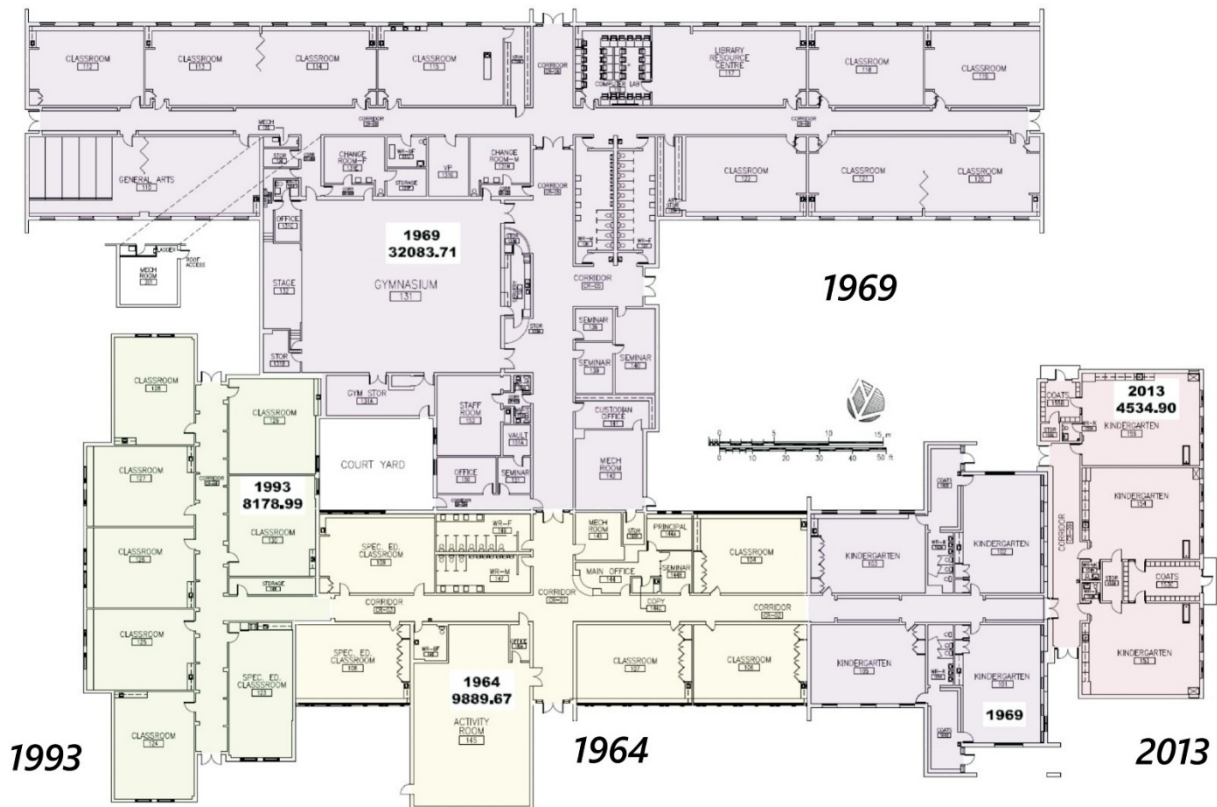
One student at Paynes Mills was blessed to have just one incredible teacher during her eight years at the school! Growing up in a rural community and attending the school was a rewarding life experience that is looked back on fondly by many. All the students knew each other and a lot of their family, as everyone was involved in the school. One-room schools were a special place, not just to be educated in the '3 R's', but also where lifelong friendships and bonds were formed.



Southwold Public School – 1964 to present

Southwold's school system grew to 19 mostly one room schools. As the small schools began to close, the Southwold Public School that we know today would evolve, from its initial six rooms in 1964 to many later additions and name changes.

- Southwold Township #1 Central School 1964 (five teachers plus a teacher-principal)
- Southwold Central School 1969 (32 teachers and close to 800 pupils)
- Southwold-Lynhurst Public School c1972 (6 primary grade classes held at former Lynhurst PS)
- Southwold Public School 1986 (33 teachers and 625 pupils in 1988)

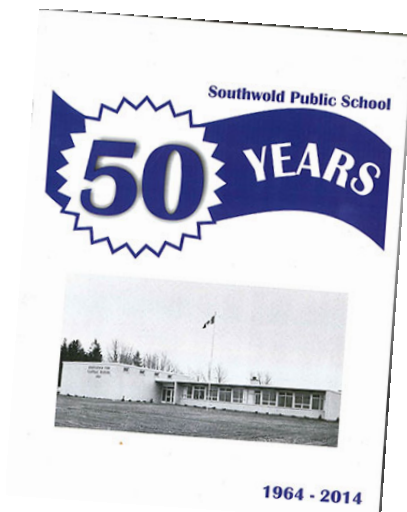


50th Anniversary Celebration and History Book

To celebrate the 50th anniversary in 2014 of Southwold Public School and its variations over the years, an Open House at the school was held in March 2015, and a history book titled 'Southwold Public School 50 Years' was published.

Many alumni, teachers, students and parents helped plan decade rooms of memorabilia for the open house that former students and staff could view as they considered memories of their time at Southwold.

The history book committee poured over documents, yearbooks, photos, and gathered information from former staff and from alumni to put into print as accurately as possible student life at Southwold over the years.



If you are interested in reading the Southwold Public School 50 Years book a copy is now available for loan at the Shedden Public Library, as well as a copy in the student library at Southwold Public School.

If you would like to view it online click the link below for a full colour PDF version of the history book on the Elgin County Archives website.

[ECVF_B154_F10_Colour.pdf](#)

Historical Sketches of Southwold Township School Sections

(These history accounts were originally published in 1971, and were reprinted in 2014 as part of the 50th anniversary celebration of Southwold Public School)

Introduction

Bells represent emotions. Throughout the ages, expressions of extreme sorrow, joy, action, and alarm have been embodied by the sound of a bell.

The former Fingal School Bell will recall many memories to the residents of that area; but now to the people of Southwold it has a different meaning. It is symbolic of the closing of the small rural schools, with all the unique memories, but at the same time it is the symbol of strength and unity at the Southwold Public School.

The bell stands to-day because of the work of many people. Mrs. Hugh Lyle, Chairman of the Bell Committee, and Past President of the Southwold School Association must have special mention. The Bell was released by the Elgin County

Board of Education to the Southwold School and Community Association.

The people of Southwold have contributed their time, labour and money so that the history of the school sections can be preserved....both through the symbol of the Bell and this booklet on the stories of the 19 Southwold Schools. We are desirous that the students who attend Southwold Public School will come to understand and appreciate the “real meaning of the Bell.”



Editors,
Margaret G. Fife (Mrs. Stuart)
Elyse AR McKillop (Mrs. Duncan)
October, 1971

BOXALL, S. S. #1... 4 MILES S.W. OF FINGAL

by Mrs. Kieth McLean

This lakeside community, named after a pioneer family in the area, built their first schoolhouse of logs, and it served the community until 1856.

The original school site was on a ridge beside a deep gulley, known to this day as “Indian Run”. (Indians are known to have travelled this area since many relics have been unearthed). The Indians were driven out on the ice on Lake Erie during the War of 1812. Students received early and memorable lessons in nature as they tramped the gulley and had a yearly expedition to the Eagle’s Nest. (See Historical Sketches)



The log school was replaced in 1856 by a frame building, located a short distance to the North of the original school. The structure cost \$700.00 and \$95.25 was spent on the equipment.

In 1889, the frame school was replaced by a brick building. The bricks for the new school were drawn from the brick yard where Mrs. Lillian House now lives. Mr. Donald Baldwin, her grandfather, made thousands of solid white bricks which went into the building of the local fine brick dwellings.

The present red brick school was built in 1921. While it was being completed, school was held in the Else house on the farm where Lyle McLean now resides. The Else house had several small windows and the pupils had great fun crawling through them.

The school ground was always the sports centre of the community. Baseball games were played every Monday and Thursday nights for many years. During the winter, skating was enjoyed by all on the dam at the back of the schoolyard. Each fall, interested parents would assist the pupils in repairing or reviewing the dam to ensure good skating for the winter months ahead. This school did not serve as an education centre alone. It was also a community centre. Picnics, wiener roasts, showers and card parties were regular activities.

Boxall section joined the Central School System in 1964.

BRAYNE'S SCHOOL, S. S. #2... N. OF PORT STANLEY

by Mrs. Frank Turville, Mr. & Mrs. A.M. York, Mrs. Lawrence Jones,
Mrs. Ethel Hagen

There are very few records of this section. Port Stanley built a school in 1837, and at that time it stated that there was a school in operation at Brayne's. The land on which it was built and the adjoining cemetery property was donated by Richard Brayne (1756-1852); later an extension of this property came from Earnshaw farm.

In the early years, the teachers salaries ranged from \$200.00 to \$300.00 yearly. In the mid 1800s, the building was also used as a community meeting place, and for Sunday afternoon church services for a period of time under the direction of Rev. W. H. Allworth.

The school burned in February 1924, and the Grade 8 class was taught at Fran York's home. A few months later, a makeshift classroom

in the vacant house near the old Earnshaw Mill was used for all Grades. In September that year, the children from Brayne's went to the Port Stanley School, and then early in the following year moved back to their newly built school. There were about 12 pupils.

For a while, they had no desks, but used tables and chairs, then later desks arrived at the L & P S Station in Port Stanley and were hauled by teams to the school. Hot meals were served at noon in the 20s. Children brought cooked food from home and it was heated up on the box stove. This stove burned wood and had a jacket around it, and since there was no basement, this stove was used for heating. A record player was much enjoyed in the early 20s, but was destroyed by the fire. In 1947, there were only seven pupils and it was decided to bus them to Port Stanley School. Two years later, the situation changed, and in 1949 the school re-opened.

In 1964, this section joined the Central System.



S. S. #3, SOUTHWOLD WEST MAGDALA (McBRIDES) SCHOOL

Situated at the intersection of County Roads 18 and 20.

3 miles north of No. 3 Highway

by Mrs. Archie McKillop

The original school was situated on the farm of Dan Turner. Mr. Turner had the West Magdala Post Office (1869-1900) hence the name West Magdala School. It has sometimes been called the Oneida Road School, since it is on the road of the

same name leading to the reserve.

Before the school was sided with insulbrick, many people called it the White School.

The first school was built in the vicinity of 1850, being a one room log structure. Along one side of the room was a long desk with a slightly slanted top. A bench upon which to sit accompanied this, and there everyone went to write regardless of whether or not his feet touched the floor. When not writing, the children sat on low benches; the boys and



girls being separated for teaching purposes. The teacher's desk resembled a cupboard and was large enough to lock a child in when he misbehaved.

In 1860, the log structure began to fall, so the senior room of S. S. #3 was built and opened in 1867, on the present site but nearer the corner of Oneida Road.

The desks were pine and maple, hand made, wood to the floor, built for two (sometimes three were squeezed in). The books were stored under the part that you wrote on. Drinking water had to be carried from a neighbouring farm. There was no janitor, the first pupil there started the fire.

In the early years, the churches frowned on any worldly activities within their walls, so many meetings were held in the school. The Literary Society proved to be very popular with debates and speeches as well as evening "Singing School".

About the 1880s, there was another school in this section, a frame one on the land where the Thames River bends on the Barber farm. It was closed when only a few attended, and the trustees of the S. S. #3 had to give one of the farmers a certain sum to draw the children from the settlement to the Oneida Road School. This was discontinued when there was only one child left to bring to school.

In the very early pioneer days, there was a school in this section at the end of the Oneida Road on a portion of land owned by the Crawfords.

The one room clapboard school of S. S. #4 was moved to the present location of the school in 1912 when the Junior room was added. It was built of clapboard too. In 1936, new out buildings were put up. Then came the installation of hydro in 1938. In 1951, the school was covered with red insulbrick and in 1957, blackboard lights were installed. In 1959, washrooms were built, an oil furnace installed and drinking fountains put in each room.

Average salaries in 1852 were \$240.00 and in 1876, a little over \$400.00. In 1936, S. S. #3 salaries were \$700.00, in 1949, \$1,800.00 and in 1960, \$3,600.00. In June 1969, S. S. #3 closed and now the children are transported by bus to the Southwold Public School.

RIVER ROAD SCHOOL. S.S.#4 . . . 3.5 MILES S. OF ST. THOMAS

by Mrs. Catherine Lindsay, from material collected by the late Mrs. S. A. Fulton

The first school was built in 1850, on one acre of land given by Mr. G. Lawton, near the gully on the east side.

At one time, a private school was held in the old meeting house, which was a Methodist Church. Some of the seats went to the United Church at Shedden and the Church became the Women's Institute Hall at Union.

In 1897, a brick school was built on the corner of Adam Fulton's farm, and the old school was sold for \$50.00.

This school and the one built in 1850 served the community for Sunday School classes. It was interdenominational.



The Women's Institute formed in 1921 had a close connection with the school. They provided swings, a piano, gave prizes, books, planted trees and helped with the concerts, picnics and parties. From 1909-1911, the Literary and Debating Society met at the school. In 1921, a basement was put under the school, and a furnace installed in the basement. In 1926, windows were built on one side to improve lighting, then in 1932, hydro was installed.

S. S. #4 was licensed for a community hall in 1927, the desks put on skids, and piled up, in or outside the school, for card parties, dances and social evenings. The Acquaintance Club held its activities and meetings at the school in the years 1936-1940.

A former student, J. H. McPherson built an annex costing \$3,500.00 in 1948. This contained the Teacher's Room and Washroom.

In 1964, a new oil burner was put in but in October of the same year, the school was sold and the area joined the Central School system.

S. S. #6, SOUTHWOLD Talbotville School
Situated on No. 4 Highway, 3.5 Miles North of St. Thomas
by Mrs. Stuart Fife

Talbotville or Five Stakes had one of the first schools in the district.

About 1827, the first school was conducted in a little log schoolhouse by a teacher named Solomon Savarine. This was soon discontinued and about 1829, the settlers decided to build a new log schoolhouse at the north-east corner of the crossroads,

the present site of the Wayside Inn.



This building had a fireplace, slab desks and seats with the pupils facing the outside walls - also a birch rod; the old theory, "Spare the rod and spoil the child" - being well emphasized. The first teacher in this building was named Price and the subjects taught were (1) Spelling (from Cobb's speller) (2) Arithmetic (3) Reading (generally from the Bible).

An article of agreement was drawn up between the schoolmaster and the settlers.

The schoolmaster received two dollars, per quarter, per pupil and boarded among the settlers free of charge.

In 1884, a new frame building was erected about a quarter of a mile north of the crossroads where the present school stands. This building served its purpose for thirty years.

In 1874, a new brick structure was constructed on the same site, this school is part of the present school and was used until June 27, 1969. For over 90 years, this building has been kept in good repair, the original ceiling being lowered to conserve heat.

In 1931, electric lights were installed and the following year, 1932, chemical toilets replaced the old outdoor privies.

In 1943, new electric blackboard lights were added, and that year the school was redecorated inside and out. In the 40s, it is interesting to note that the heat was provided by a furnace at the back and a gas heater at the front.

Due to the heavy enrolment in 1951; a modern addition consisting of a classroom, library, teachers room and modern flush washrooms was added at the cost of approximately \$36,000.00.

At this time, a well of 190 feet depth was drilled and provided a bounteous water supply. Then

came the installation of a modern heating system for both rooms. Other renovations in the original room have been a new ceiling, new hardwood floor and new students' and teachers' desks.

Talbotville School closed June 27, 1969.



PAYNES MILLS, S. S. #7

2 MILES WEST OF TALBOTVILLE ON #3 HIGHWAY

by Mrs. Tom Blackman

Grist, saw and oatmeal mills owned by brothers Henry and Frederick Payne gave this area its name. The first school was known as the Wade Schoolhouse and was built in 1832 on Lot 34 South. Money to buy nails and shingles was raised by subscription.

In 1862, land was purchased on lot 35 north side of the north branch of the Talbot Road from Henry Payne and this became the permanent site of the school.

In 1876, S. S. #18 in the area known as the Clergy Reserve on Lot #24,

Concession 4 (land now owned by Don Parsons) decided to join S. S. #7. Their log schoolhouse had burned 10 years before and they had no school because of the small number of pupils.

In 1889, land was bought on the side

road north from Paynes Mills to build a school for both sections but because of the



pond being dangerous to children passing it, the majority voted to rebuild on the present site. That building, with alterations, stands today.

In the 1920s and 1930s, it was often the custom for the beginners to start at Easter and thus get a couple of months training in the art of sitting still and keeping quiet. In 1934, Home Economics was taught and provisions brought from home for hot lunches at noon. Pencils and scribblers were supplied by the school board since 1936 and text books since 1951.

The new addition was put on in 1961 and the gas furnace, the teacher's room, flush toilets and new seats made a modern school out of the old building. A vote to build a new one had been turned down by the ratepayers.

Wages have changed from a bushel of grain per pupil to \$6.00 per month and up to \$1,100.00 in 1930. In 1933, they dropped as low as \$600.00 for the year and gradually went back up to as high as \$5,750.00 in 1969.

In October 1968, Grades VII and VIII students were bussed to Southwold Public Schools and Grades I-VI were taught at Paynes Mills until 1969.

FROME, S. S. #8... 2.5 MILES WEST OF PAYNES MILLS

by Annie Gunning (1869) from a Pioneer History of Elgin County
and by Mrs. Albert Collard



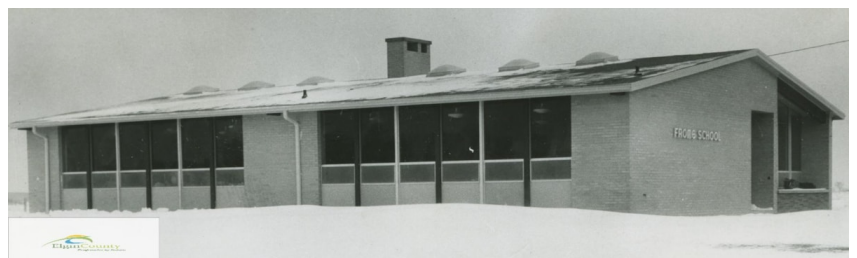
The first school was built of bricks in 1820 on the site near where the Frome United Church now stands (This was the former Congregational Church).

The block schoolhouse had a large fireplace and log benches for seats. This structure was used for 45 years, until 1865, when the next schoolhouse was erected. This was on the North side of the Highway, at

the West end of the section. The school section extended 1.5 miles north, 1 mile south, 1 mile west of Back Street (Highway No. 3).

When the school was first started, all persons sending children had to pay a dollar a year for each one, but later they became free to everyone. The teachers received \$12.00 a month, and that was considered good pay. This colonial type red brick building served the Frome area for 89 years.

When the Ontario Department of Highways decided to widen No. 3 Highway, 6 feet at the



front of the school would have been on the Highway property, so this necessitated the building of the new school. \$13, 500.00 was paid by the Highway Department for the old red brick schoolhouse and in 1958, land was bought on the South side of the Highway about 400 yards east of the other school. A \$40,000.00 two room brick school was erected and 43 pupils moved into one classroom on December 22, 1958. One classroom was in use until September 1, 1959, when a second teacher was hired and the two rooms placed into use.

Another historic building close to the highway is the United Church at Frome. This was used by the school children for their annual Christmas concert. This was the first Congregational Church in Upper Canada, and was started by the local school teacher, Joseph Silcox. In 1844, Mr. Silcox was appointed the Superintendent of schools for the Township of Southwold.

(At the time of original publication) This school is still in operation, as part of the Southwold Public School system. There are two classes of Grade 3 students here.

SHEDDEN, S. S. #9... 3 MILES WEST OF FROME ON NO. 3 HIGHWAY

by Miss Marion Orchard and Mr. Douglas Orchard

The first schoolhouse was built in 1849, on the west half of Lot 16, North Branch of the Talbot Road. It was made of logs, 30 x 24 feet in dimensions and the cost was 50 pounds.

One of the first teachers, David Wallace was engaged on trial for 3 months at the salary of 4 pounds per month.

“The first known teacher who supposedly taught from 1818-1833 in log cabins had 13 scholars who paid about 75¢ each. His salary was \$10.00 per month.”

In 1853, “it was resolved that every individual sending to the school to pay at the rate of two shillings, six pence each per quarter and the residue by taxation on all rateable property in this section.” By January 1856, the cost of education was extended to read: “Resolved, that every actual scholar shall be taxed half a cord of wood a year, cut at a proper length for the stove to be delivered at the schoolhouse within one month from this date or pay the price of such wood.”



In 1865, a new brick schoolhouse was built at the present location. One half acre was purchased for \$90.00.

Increasing population of the section necessitated greater accommodation for the pupils and as a result another room was added to the north side of the school. The old room accommodated the junior pupils and the newly-built room was taken over by the senior pupils.

Up until the building of the addition, all male teachers were employed. It can be surmised, the reason for this was due to the disciplinary problem, because the pupils attending the school ranged from beginners to young adults. The older pupils came to school only in the winter months when the farm work was at a slack period.

The school playground was extended in 1906 and in 1932 the building was wired for electricity for the sum total of \$80.00.

Items most frequently listed in the account books include: Stove (\$8.50); stove pipe (\$0.45); pail for drinking water (\$0.25); glass and putty (\$0.85); cup for drinking (\$0.10); and water pail (\$0.25); going after and hanging maps (\$0.50), but there is no mention of books until 1870 when \$10.00 was paid for globe and library. In 1870, Shedden became a "free school". In 1932, a \$10.00 donation was given to the local library so that the reading facilities could be increased. This donation increased through the years and then with the formation of the Elgin Co-Operative Library, these facilities became available to the pupils. Septic water systems were installed in the school rooms on the advice of the medical officers of health in October 1943 and in 1950, more modern washrooms and a central oil heating plant were installed. This necessitated another addition to the schoolhouse and a nine thousand dollar debenture extending over ten years was applied for and received from Southwold Township to meet the cost of construction. This school served the area until 1969.

BROWN'S SCHOOL, S. S. #10... 3 MILES WEST OF SHEDDEN ON NO. 3 HIGHWAY

From a Pioneer History of Elgin County

This section has seen at least four schoolhouses since its first settlement. The first schoolhouse, a log one was erected in 1816 and was a Union School. Later, this building was used as a dwelling house. The school books used then were Cobb's Spelling Book, The New Testament and English Reader. The Arithmetic Tables were written on paper hung on the wall. The pens were goose quills, and the desks were made of boards, while the seats were mere benches made by boring four holes in a plank and fastening in four legs.

The next school was one that stood on the S. E, corner of Lot 10, N. Side and known as the Cottage School. It was a frame structure and built about 1820. While



this school was still in existence, some dissatisfaction arose in the neighbourhood, so some of the residents built the third schoolhouse on the S.W. Corner of Lot 8, North. While this school was being built, rather than send their children to the Cottage School, school was opened in the house of James VanVelsor. The school was completed and was known as the Seminary. Two schools now stood in the section within 3/4 mile of each other, and it was not uncommon to see children pass by the one to attend the other. The teachers of the different schools were also drawn into the strife, often going about canvassing for scholars. Better

wages were also a plea as they were paid 75¢ a scholar for three months. The teachers boarded from house to house, a week for each scholar. The Seminary prevailed and in 1834, the Cottage School was closed and shortly after torn down. Again, dissatisfaction arose over the selection of a site for a new schoolhouse. The old one was out of date and later used for a drive barn. The N.E. Corner of Lot 5 was selected and was erected in 1853. This school was in operation until 1967 when the students were bussed to Fingal.

SOUTHWOLD S. S. #11, WATSON'S CORNERS
SITUATED 2.5 MILES WEST OF FINGAL ON TALBOT ROAD
by Mrs. Roy House

Watson's Corners School had the distinction of being the first school to be in operation in Southwold Township. It was in 1816, James Watson, one of Colonel Talbot's early settlers, donated an acre of land from the northeast corner of Lot 8, Talbot Road South for the purpose of building a schoolhouse. In 1818, a few industrious settlers soon erected a log building to serve as a school. Most of the logs were cut at the site and the benches were made from slabs. A large fireplace was the heating system.

In the original deed of Watson's Corners School which was registered in 1850, it was stated that (1) The building now standing should be at all times used as a schoolhouse where the Holy Scripture would be used as a school book. (2) The school would be at all times open for a Sabbath School. (3) All future houses erected on the property would be used for school purposes. (4) The land was not to be sold or the schoolhouse used for any other use except that of a school. (5) No common Showman would be allowed to exhibit any idle feet of jugglery. (6) There should be a school constantly kept or taught on this property.

The first teacher chosen for Watson's Corners was William Hannah who taught for two years using the New Testament and Cobb's Spelling book for his texts. He received a salary of \$200.00 and boarded with the scholars parents.

In 1820, disaster struck when after school hours, a log rolled from the fire onto the floor and the school was burned to the ground. School was held in private homes for the next ten years.

In 1830, a new frame building 24 x 22 feet was erected on the same spot. One teacher, a Mr. C. Willson was an excellent Latin scholar and received one hundred acres of land each year in the township of London from Colonel Burwell as a fee for teaching his sons Latin at noon hour.

Mr. John McLennan must have held a record for years of teaching in one school. He taught at Watson's Corners for twenty-nine years. In 1908, his salary was \$525.00. Mr. McLennan at times ate dinner at the present Horton Farm but was still able to keep a



watchful eye on the boys who liked to walk the fence. In 1893, the last Watson's Corners School was erected, it being a sturdy white brick building 30 feet by 40 feet. The boys and girls had a separate entrance and separate washrooms, a large basement provided much winter enjoyment. It was originally heated with wood burning stoves, then a furnace. A new oil furnace was installed in 1958.

In 1912, an arithmetic book cost 10¢, a primer reader 4¢ and a speller 15¢.

It might be noted that on December 16 of 1921, school was closed because of diphtheria.

Attendance at the time was thirty-five but varied greatly with the older boys attending only in the winter months.

During the 1920s, a very active community Sunday School was held in S. S. #11.

In 1959, the trustees were each paid \$30.00 a year. The doors were closed for learning in November 1964, so the school property could be sold.

Presently, children from this area are bussed to the Southwold Public School.

FINGAL, S.S. #12 . . . 6.5 MILES SOUTH WEST OF ST. THOMAS ON TALBOT ROAD

by Mr. And Mrs. Clarence Culver

The first known school in the oldest village of Southwold was built on Lot 17 on the Talbot Road. The property was owned by Phineas Barber. The teachers at this time lived with neighbourhood families, each one boarding the teacher in turn.

The next school was held in a Former Methodist Church situated near the Fingal Cemetery grounds.

In the years 1866-68 it is recorded that Dr. John Fulton conducted a summer school

for three seasons at Fingal and graduated about 100 students. This was the second attempt in Southwestern Ontario to establish a medical school. Dr. Fulton was a graduate of Dr. John Rolph's Toronto School of Medicine. The first medical school in Upper Canada had been opened at St. Thomas in 1824 (The Talbot Dispensary) but was of short duration. The next school was held in another former Methodist



Church in Fingal on Lot 11 in 1898. This was a two room school built of white brick. This school continued in use until November 1912 when the school and grounds were sold to Duncan McAlpine. He then sold the school and the portion of land on which it stood to Mr. Richard McKell who in turn gave it to the Catholic Church.

On February 7, 1911, a meeting was called by the trustees of S. S. #12 to consider building a new schoolhouse. Mr. Atkins, Public School Inspector, explained that the situation in S. S. #12 was unsatisfactory. He further advised consolidated schools, first uniting S. S. #12 and S. S. #13, and building a new schoolhouse in the centre of the two sections. S. S. #13, called White's School was situated 1 1/4 miles east of Fingal on the Talbot Road on the property now owned by Frank Jones.

As requested by the Trustees, the Township Council passed a bylaw authorizing the joining of the two sections. A new site was purchased from Philip Brady and a new two room red brick school was built in 1912.

On September 25, 1912 a discussion was held by the ratepayers to build an addition to the present school. Mr. Waugh, School Inspector gave the regulations required for Continuation Classes in Public Schools. This would allow the pupils to obtain their Junior Matriculation in the one school. As a result in 1913, the building was enlarged to a four room school and called the Fingal Continuation School. This school was burned in 1917 during the Christmas holidays and for the balance of the term the pupils were taught in the basement of Fingal Knox Presbyterian Church.

In 1918, the school was rebuilt on the same site and opened in September. It also was a four room red brick building and is presently standing.

In 1941, the Continuation School Classes were discontinued for lack of students. This was the first and only Continuation School in Southwold and served many students from a wide area.

Two rooms were in general use for public school teaching which increased to four by 1965. This school was closed in 1969.

S. S. #14, SOUTHWOLD... MIDDLEMARCH SCHOOL

Situated on the Talbot Road, about 2 miles west of St. Thomas

Copied from Tweedsmuir History per kindness of
Middlemarch Women's Institute
by Mrs. John Futcher

The first school it is said in S. S. #14 district was taught by Mr. Phyland in a small slab-sided building on



the top of the St. Thomas hill. In 1840, it was moved to a log hut, Lot 42. There was also some teaching done in a log dwelling on Lot 41.

Re-arrangements made two sections, one running from Harry Thornton's home at Talbot and Pleasant Street to Butler's Side road Lot 39. The other section ran from Lot 39 to Smoke's Corners or Middlemarch, the school was a log one built on Lot 38. Then the school was held in a log school on the south side in Lot 33. Later school was conducted on the north side in a frame school with just a narrow walk separating it from the blacksmith shop located on the north-west corner.

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Stinchcombe lived in the school for two years when they moved from Lambeth in 1887. Then the shop was moved back and the school replaced by a cottage.

A last change of boundaries completed the present section, #14 Southwold from Humphries Sideroad, Lot 29 to the west boundary of Kettle Creek. A white brick school was built on the present location in 1865 and a third of an acre was bought from Mr. Sutton, Lot 36. The playground was too small so it was increased to half an acre at a cost of \$4.20, and later one acre for \$100.00. Many residents donated work and material, Mr. David Gooding, Keeper at the House of Industry, donated the flag pole from his farm at Sparta.



The white brick school of 1865 was replaced by our present red brick school in 1906, and teaching was done in the Grange Hall during its construction. The yard was levelled and improved in 1928, perennials planted and a spirea hedge planted under the sponsorship of the Middlemarch Women's Institute.

Later improvements to the school were hydro installations in 1932, inside toilets in 1943.

Nursing service was started in 1943 and chocolate milk was provided daily in 1944. Still further improvements - a new chimney was installed in 1951, new flush toilets in 1953, in 1954 a new fence and furnace and in 1955 the school was insulated and in 1956 new moveable desks were installed.

This school ceased to be an instructional centre in 1964 and the pupils from this area were bussed to the Southwold Area School - the original five room central school.

This community lying as it does in the Talbot Settlement and near St. Thomas has always received cultural and educational advantages from each, and the disadvantages of a transient population especially since the First Great War.

COON ROAD SCHOOL, S. S. #15

by Ross Gregory

The early history of the Coon Road School cannot be located, but its location was at the fork in the road in the corner field owned by the Munro Family.

About 1876, the old frame school was torn down, and the present one was built. It was erected in the centre of the section. Mr. Allison from Port Stanley had the contract.

The Country Club was started by the women of the area to knit and provide extras for the soldiers during World War I, and continued to do the same during World War II. They contributed to school supplies and the social life of the area. It was dissolved in 1950, and the Home and Community Club was formed. This group provided many useful articles for the classroom, and held many social activities for

the community. In 1937, Mr. Frank Halcombe of St. Thomas came once a week to teach music. He was the first music teacher to come to the school to give special lessons.

In 1943 a new furnace was put in and a year later the school was re-decorated during the summer vacation. An eavestrough was put on one side of the school and new perennial beds were planted. Indoor toilets were also installed that year. 1950 saw the installation of a new oil-burning furnace, the redecoration of the school and better cupboards were provided. In 1951 the trustees built a new backstop and fence on



the north side. The Coon Road School was sold for \$1,000.00 and joined with five other sections, namely, River Road, Brayne's, Boxall, Watson's Corners and Middlemarch to form the first Central School in Southwold.

At the time of closing in 1964, there were 11 pupils.

S. S. #17.... SOUTHWOLD LAWRENCE STATION SCHOOL

About 9 miles east of Dutton, near 401 Highway

by Mrs. Alex Turner



The first school of this community was built on the north-east corner of the 4th Concession, in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The small building was of log construction, built before nails were made; the roof was clap boards placed on small logs laid lengthwise of the building and held in place by long poles laid on top of the clap boards and tied down to the logs with withes of blue beechwood.

The benches were of split basswood logs supported by four legs fitted to the holes bored in the slabs. The desk was a long oak slab, three inches thick across the side of the building. A large fireplace and chimney filled one end.

The attendance, especially in the winter was very large, many boys attended in the winter only, until they reached the age of twenty-one or two. As many as seventy or eighty pupils were crowded into one room under the supervision of one teacher. About the year 1860, Malcolm McIntyre, donated a small piece of land just west of the McIntyre cemetery, very near the road for the erection of a new school. There was no schoolyard, so the children played their games in a field across the road. During the moving, the teacher carried the sole blackboard on his back.

At this time, the school year ended in January, with salaries ranging from \$125.00 to \$200.00 a year. Money was very scarce and no doubt it was a hardship to raise the sum.

The teachers at this time boarded around at the different homes, spending several weeks at each one.

In 1878, the schoolhouse was moved from the McIntyre property to a more central location on Lot 13, Concession 3, Southwold. After moving, it was bricked and is still standing today. It is vacant.

With the advent of the McDonald Cartier Freeway or Highway 401, the brick school at S. S. #17, after serving the community for 82 years closed and a fine modern brick school with all the latest facilities for comfort and convenience was erected in 1960. This building was in use until June 1969 when it was closed and the pupils of the area were transported by bus to the Southwold Public School.



S. S. #21....SOUTHWOLD MUSKOKA SCHOOL

Situated 12 miles from Dutton, 18 miles from Southwold Public School

by Miss Jennie Balsden from a Pioneer History of Elgin County

This school was situated in the northern most part of Southwold Township very near the Thames River. It was situated on Lot 4, Broken Fronts, fronting on Concession 1. Another name for the school in the pioneer days was Routh Road or Muskoka.

The land in this vicinity for the most part was sandy, rich and when well fertilized made good and profitable farms. The early inhabitants were rewarded for their labours with abundant crops of all eatables in this area of great fertility.

The first school mentioned was a large frame building having one storey, painted white with six windows and one door protected by an entry which is six feet by twelve feet.

A large, rusty stove and bent stove pipes were the means of heat. Four seats taken from the church building were used besides twenty regular seats, parts of which were missing and others very rickety. The school building was completed in the summer of 1878.

Mr. Dougald DeCow, became the first teacher with a salary of \$250.00 per annum which was average for that time. This teaching position was held for three months. It is believed that he resigned willingly, "for the children were not unlike trained horses, for many were the gallant boys who had their ideas of the teacher's powers."



Settlers came very slowly to this area and in 1895, there were only about 125 inhabitants.

Several lady teachers taught the 3r's at S. S. #21 and in 1895, a man again took on the task. It is believed that for many years, teachers in this area received "the paltry sum" of \$250.00 to teach and control from thirty to forty children.

The school burned down around 1900 and another one room frame building was constructed.

In later years, the second school of this area was sided with insulbrick and remained in operation until June 1965 when the school was

closed and the pupils went to S. S. #3 and S. S. #17 until these schools were closed in 1969.

Today public school children travel by bus to Southwold Public School for their education. S. S. #21 had the distinction of being one of the small schools of the township.

IONA STATION, S. S. #6, #22... 6 MILES FROM DUTTON

By Mrs. Duncan Galbraith, Mrs. James M Pyatt, Mr. Harvey Kendel

The first school in the district was a log cabin structure, and the black ash timbers were secured from a low spot on the property.

Following this, a frame structure building was erected across the road from the log school, for this school in 1862, we have records of the grants. The Legislature grant for Southwold was \$8.56 and for Dunwich, it was \$14.72. The school insurance premium was \$2.50 and wood sold for \$0.85 a cord. Later in 1883, green wood bought for the school was \$1.20 per cord, dry wood was bought at \$1.45. In 1921, dry wood was \$3.40 per cord. In 1879, the present white brick school was built on the corner of Shackleton Street and Townline, A lively quarrel took place as to whether the new school should be built on its present location or at Iona Station. The old school was moved just south of its former location and used as a home for the Station Agent.

Later, it was moved across the railroad tracks. (Pere Marquette Railway). This area was settled almost entirely by the Scottish, and many of the early pupils spoke only Gaelic, fortunately so did the teachers.

In 1880, seats and desks were purchased for \$95.00 and in 1882, it is recorded in the minute book that the “midsummer vacation

shall extend through a term of six weeks, from July 8 - Aug. 17 inclusive.” In 1883, the trustees authorized the teacher to engage a pupil to sweep the schoolhouse, at the rate of \$0.50 a month. In that year, the teacher was paid \$300.00 and in 1888, it was \$450.00 for salary.



This school section had very good training in public speaking through the use of plays, debates and research speeches. Iona had an Agricultural Fair and in 1914, a grant was given to the school children for participation. In 1934, music was taught by a special music teacher.

In 1967, the school closed and the Dunwich Township School at Dutton and the Southwold pupils went to the Southwold Public School.

S. S. #8 AND #20

Situated about 5.5 miles north of No.3 Highway on the Southwold Dunwich Townline

by Mrs. Pete McPherson, Mrs. Mary Clark and Miss Kate McNabb, per John Smith

On the townline between Dunwich and Southwold stands the Union School No. 8 and 20. The first school was built of logs in 1830, south of the present site. The second school was built across the road on Preston McBride's farm in 1860. A modern, large, brick school was erected as the population increased and there was a need for a larger school. This school was erected on the present site in 1892. The land was purchased from Thomas Ibbitson for the sum of \$100.00 and served until March 5, 1920 when it was burned. Firemen were unable to save the buildings. Without delay, the trustees built the present school. An addition was built to accommodate the modern washrooms and oil heating system in 1958.



Further improvements were made; a chain fence was erected, electricity was installed, a telephone, and a hardwood floor laid in the classroom.

At one time as many as fifty pupils attended in this section. The older boys who helped on the farm attended only during the winter months. Male teachers hired at this time possibly because discipline would be more of a problem.

At one time every pupil attending school had to provide a quarter of a cord of wood cut the proper length for the stove. Neglecting to bring the wood he would be fined one dollar. Later on, advertising for tenders for firewood was the main business transacted at the annual meetings.

It is interesting to note the contrast in teacher's salaries between the early days and the present time. In 1862, Robert March received as his yearly salary \$30.17. In 1879, the teacher's wage was around \$200.00. In 1920, salaries advanced to \$800.00. Then in depression years, salaries dropped to \$400.00. The trend was upward again and in 1946, a salary of \$1,400.00 was paid and so on up.

The trustees were always interested in improvements and a fuller education, so music was added to the curriculum in 1936.

For years the senior trustees acted as secretary-treasurer but as government reports and departmental grants became more complicated, it was decided to appoint a permanent secretary treasurer.

S. S. #8 and 20, closed in June 1967, and the senior pupils were bussed to Lawrence Station and the Juniors to S. S. #3, Southwold.

Presently, the pupils from this area board yellow school busses and travel to Southwold Public School to obtain their education.

S. S. #19, #26, #20 TOWNLINE SCHOOL

Situated on Wellington Road about 4.5 miles North of St. Thomas

by Mrs. M. Blewett, Mr. W. Blewett

The first school in this area was built of logs hewn from the virgin forest by the sturdy pioneers around 1850. The roof was of clap boards placed on small logs laid lengthwise of the building and held in place by long poles laid on top of the clap boards and tied down to the logs with withes of blue beechwood. It was located on Lot 1, being a Union School in Yarmouth and Westminister Townships.

The desks and benches faced the wall, around three sides of the room. The pupils waited patiently for the command, "Books away", "Turn Out," and "Go", and at the word Go, would make a dash for the door. Often the drinking water came from the same spring where the farm animals drank. Games played in those days were "Four Old Cat," "Fox and Hound," and "Pump, Jump, Pull Away."

In December 1854, the Council passed a By-Law defining the boundary lines for schools in Southwold Township. S. S. #19,



#26, #20 consisted of all the Lots in concessions A, B, C, and D, from the Westminster Townline to the road on which James McBain lives.

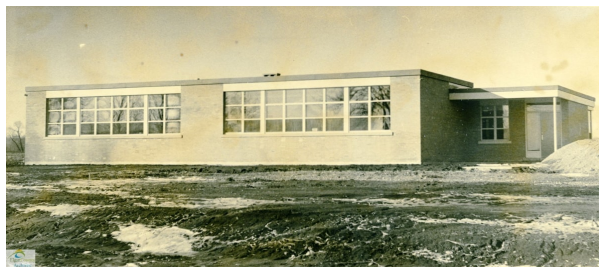
As the logs in the first school started to decay, it was replaced and the second school was a frame structure.

The frame school was covered with red brick in 1908. In bygone days, tramps travelled through the country and it was not unusual for one of these transients to visit the school lobby and cloakroom and help himself to some lunches on the shelf there. These he took over to the church shed and had a real picnic. The other students shared their lunches with the ones whose had been stolen.

The Annual Christmas Concert was always the highlight of the year. Not having lights in the school, they joined forces with the Sunday School for the Christmas Concert in the church with oil lamps.

In 1914, the school was rebuilt with a basement, a furnace was installed in the basement to replace the one in the classroom. These renovations cost \$2,330.00. In later years while still a Union School, the assessment ran Yarmouth 50%, Southwold 42% and Westminster 8%.

In 1963, the local trustees purchased more land from Bill Glen and in that year a



new two room school was built for \$55,000.00 with debentures to run for 20 years. This school was built on the same site but faces the sideroad instead of the busy Wellington Road. It is being used today as one of the satellite schools of Southwold Township.

S. S. #24, #25... SOUTHWOLD AND YARMOUTH LYNHURST SCHOOL **Situated on Wellington Road about 1 Mile North of St. Thomas** by Mrs. James McBain

The first school to serve this area north of St. Thomas was a small log structure built around 1850 on the John McLarty farm about a mile east of Wellington Road on the 10th Concession.

The desks and benches faced the wall with the drinking water being provided from a spring on the hill where farm animals also drank.

When this school became too small, a new one was built on the Townline later called the Wellington Road, and made a Union School with a school in Southwold now known as #24, #25 Southwold and Yarmouth.

The new school was built on part of an acre purchased from Samuel Freeman for \$110.00 and a frame one room school was built 2 miles north west of St. Thomas, on Wellington Road in 1874. The building was built of V siding and later a double



siding was put on. The floor was a double floor of two inch plank and hard pine flooring on top. There was an entranceway with cloakrooms at the front and a large woodshed at the back.

In the early days, the older boys took turns looking after the fire, sweeping floors etc.,. They were paid ten cents a day in the winter and five cents a day in the summer.

When this school became too

small, after serving the community for forty-nine years and when St. George Street and Lynhurst were built up more and so many scholars came from the district, it was thought advisable to build a school further south. One and one-half acres of land was purchased from Henry Pressey for \$800.00 and a modern two room red brick school was built in 1923.

The red brick school built in 1923 is known as the Lynhurst School. The new school consisted of a senior room, junior room and small teacher's room. There was no bathroom facilities and water for drinking was pumped from a well. In 1954, two new rooms were added, later came the addition of washrooms and cloakrooms. The pupils had staggered classes at this time and one class attended Lockes School for a term. City water was piped into the school and a new wing consisting of two classrooms, teacher's accommodation and a new hallway was added in the 1960s.

The school taken over by the Southwold School Area in 1969 introduced Kindergarten classes for the first time and students for this class and Grade 8 were transported also for the first time to the Southwold Public School by bus.

A larger playground has been added to the existing area when an acre of land was purchased from John Wallace, to the west of the school.

The Home and School Association along with the Community Club played a large part in the life of the school. Playground equipment, kitchen facilities, graduation banquets, Christmas concerts and parties were provided for the students, also books were bought for the school library.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Lynhurst School also took part in competition with the North Yarmouth Schools in their annual Fall School Fairs.

The school has been used for important ratepayer's meetings, social parties and as a polling division for Federal, Provincial, Municipal and all other special election days. Lynhurst School is still in operation as a junior school for years 1, 2, 3, and 4.



SOUTHWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOL

by W. S. Robinson

In November 1964, Southwold Township No. 1 Central School admitted its first student body. The structure consisted of five classrooms, a General Purpose Room, washrooms and office areas. The staff consisted of five teachers.

This school was established under the chairmanship of Ross Gregory. Other Board members were J.E. Fatcher, William Dees, K. McLean, and E. Reck. The secretary for the School Board was

Mrs. H. Jackson.

Five years later, in September, 1969, an addition of seventeen classrooms, a General Purpose Room, Staff Room and office and storage areas, was put into use. The former General Purpose Room was



converted to a Library Resource Centre. Twenty-six teachers composed the staff of the enlarged school plant.

Due to increased enrolment, the former schools of Frome and Townline had to be kept open to provide sufficient accommodation. There are two classrooms in each of these schools. These two schools operated as extensions of the larger Southwold Township No. 1 Central School and provided instruction for the Year 3 and 4 pupils who were unable to be accommodated in the larger building. The total staff was thirty in number and approximately 750 students were in attendance.

The Year 7 and 8 pupils in the Lynhurst area were enrolled in Southwold Township No. 1 Central School to enable all intermediate students in Southwold Township to benefit from the specialized facilities available at that school.

Mr. Clarence Culver, Chairman of the Board at that time and the following board members were instrumental in bringing about the final consolidation of the elementary schools in Southwold Township: Lester Longhurst, Ross Gregory, Mrs. R.E. Scott and Clarence Hunter.

The Inspector of Public Schools, Mr. A.D. McColl, who is now Area Superintendent of Schools, worked untiringly to amalgamate the various school sections in an attempt to provide better resources and an improved educational program in the area.

Shortly after the formation of the Elgin County Board of Education, the name of the school was changed to Southwold Public School.

A number of special facilities exist in this new and enlarged building.

Approximately 4,000 books and 28 periodicals are located in the Library Resource Centre and are available to the students, parents and teachers of the school.

The Resource Centre also contains much of the modern Audio Visual equipment necessary in bringing an adequate educational program to the students in the area.

Two Kindergarten classrooms were part of the new addition and made possible the beginning of education at the kindergarten level for the first time in Southwold.

Certain rooms were designed for a specific use and therefore, contain special equipment. These rooms: an Art Room, a Science Room, a double-sided General Purpose Room with change and shower facilities were included in the original design of the addition. Three pod areas exist (two classrooms separated by folding wall). These enable the teaching staff to carry on small and large group instruction whenever deemed necessary by them.

With the facilities noted above, and sufficient staff to enable one staff member to devote full time to being the resource librarian, and another to devote her time to the improvement of reading, as well as a full time principal, free of classroom instruction, brought about a highly flexible organization and program which endeavours to teach pupils at their instructional levels in the various areas. The teaching staff is concerned not only with academic development but for the total development of the human person. With the very fine facilities and competent staff, it should be possible to prepare the students adequately for the future.

Southwold Public School Opening Highlights

These 3 photographs used in the St. Thomas Times-Journal article published December 11, 1964 highlighted the official opening of Southwold Township School Area No. 1 Central School.
Courtesy of Elgin County Archives

The photo at right shows 3 unidentified students reading a book in the new bright corridor.



A bright, spacious atmosphere conducive to learning is the keynote at this new school. A typical classroom scene is this one in principal Gordon Sim's grade 7 and 8 class.

"A Novelty in Rural Schools". For rural school children, an all-purpose room where they can receive physical education instruction and play indoor games is indeed a novelty.

Playing in the modern room are left to right, Jim Lyle, Phillip Jones, Heather Crabe, and Jeanette Butler

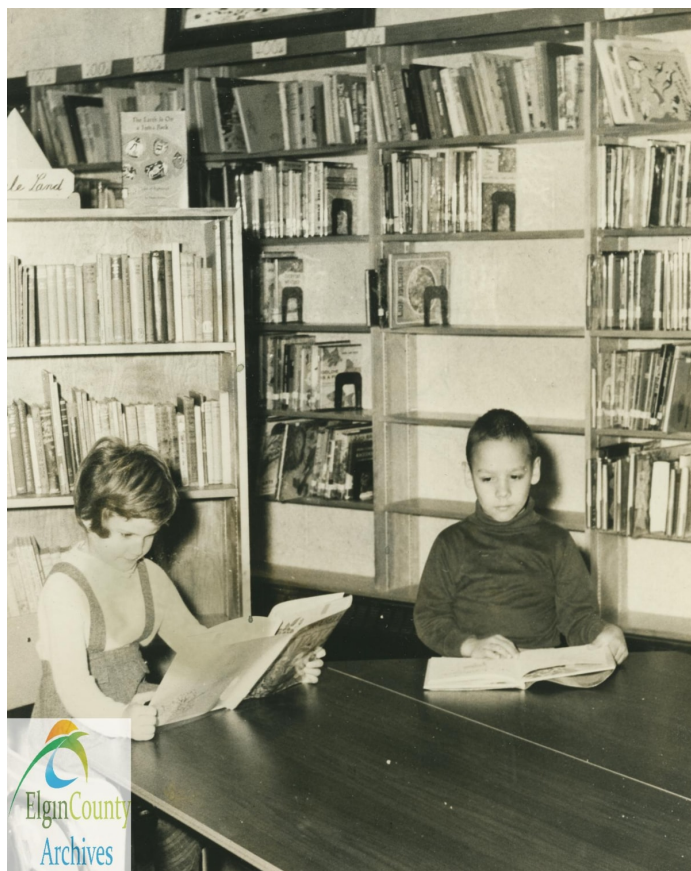




These 2 photographs are from the Times-Journal on November 28, 1969 when the newly expanded Southwold Central School held its official opening.

Courtesy of Elgin County Archives

Left to right, students John Broere, Janice Emery, Karen Brown, and Kim Bogart try out the new microscopes with teacher Pat Fox.



The modern new resource centre is equipped with approximately 3,500 books, plus audio-visual equipment such as tape recorders and slide projectors.

Left to right, grade one students Kim Gilbert and Troy Tanner.

Current use of school buildings in 1971

S.S. #1 Boxall - Private Residence
S.S. #2 Brayne's - Private Residence
S.S. #3 West Magdala (McBrides) - Private Residence
S.S. #4 River Road - Private Residence
S.S. #6 Talbotville - used by Elgin County Board of Education for Storage
S.S. #7 Payne's Mills - used by Elgin County Board of Education for Storage
S.S. #8 Frome - Satellite School
S.S. #9 Shedden - Central Elgin Welders
S.S. #10 Brown's - Private Residence
S.S. #11 Watson's Corners - Private Residence
S.S. #12 Fingal - converted into an apartment building
S.S. #14 Middlemarch - Private Residence
S.S. #15 Coon Road - Private Residence
S.S. #17 Lawrence Station - Private Residence
S.S. #21 Muskoka - Private Residence
S.S. #8, 20 Private Residence
S.S. #19,26,20 Townline Satellite school
S.S. #6, 22 Iona Station - Egg Grading Station
S.S.#24,25 Lynhurst - Junior School; Years 1, 2, 3, and 4

Historical Sketches

Miss Fannie Silcox of Frome was a normal school graduate with long black hair that hung in curls down her back and she managed a school of 75 pupils. In winter, she had many pupils who were in their twenties. The classes ranged from the A B C's to the Fifth Reader and she kept perfect order with a pig-skin rawhide. (From an article written by George Payne) Miss Silcox taught at Paynes' Mills about 1866.

The teacher had to board around with different families; those having the most children boarded the teacher the longest. You were not allowed to choose your own boarding place (From an article by Mrs. Fredrick Payne who was Miss Sarah Ellen Sharon before her marriage, and taught in Paynes' Mill in 1846.)

At the annual meeting, January 1864, Cyrus Stafford and John Horton touched off a mild explosion by moving "that we have a free school and that the teacher's

salary be raised by taxation”. This was carried against an opposition amendment favouring the old rate-bill of \$0.75 per scholar. Now bachelor taxpayers, old folks and childless couples had to share the burden of education, along with the parents of scholars. At the next annual meeting in 1865, a proposal to bring in a rate bill of only \$0.50 per pupil was lost. For five years the “free school” question seemed to be a sleeping dog, but in January 1870, the animal was aroused for the final growl. This time, a resolution “that all expenses for the said school should be provided by taxation on rateable property was challenged by one resolution of \$0.50 per scholar per quarter rate-bill and another one \$0.75 per scholar per quarter amendment”. The records show a “poll was then demanded and kept open until 4 P.M., When the original motion was carried and Free School was declared by a majority of ONE. (From Centennial History of S. S. #9) A financial item in the record book - Setting up back houses (after Halloween.....\$0.75)

The second school was held in a former Methodist Church situated on the Fingal Cemetery Grounds. A humorous tale of that time is told that after this building was abandoned, the children believed it to be haunted. A terrible noise one night seemed to confirm all the dreadful and frightening stories. To waylay their fears, an investigation was held. It was discovered to be an imprisoned billy goat. (Fingal)

Rural children have had many advantages in nature study. On the farm now owned by Roy Jasper, there is an Eagle’s nest. The nest is moved only when the tree in which it is located, dies. The eagle then chooses another tall tree in the immediate vicinity, commanding a view of the lake and surrounding area. (Boxall) Children attending school in this community were not bussed to and from but walked down the gravel roads. Those coming down the lake road passed underneath the branches of the Balm of Gilead tree - 8 feet in girth. The tree is over 150 years old and has an unusual history. John Lumley, an early worker in the church was out riding his favourite mount and carried a Balm of Gilead switch with him as a horse whip. He thrust it into the fence corner at random and rode off, leaving it there. The twig took root growing into a tree and to this day casts the shadow of the evening sun on passersby. (Boxall)

The trustees collected the school tax, which was usually paid in silver, as the amount was small, and silver the currency. When Miss Belle Campbell called to collect her salary for the whole year, she couldn’t carry it away. (Iona Station, John K. Elliot)

Ink wells made good fly traps during school hours. (River Road)

In the 1920s when Mrs. Neil Campbell (Miss Bessie Glass) taught for three years, hot lunches were cooked during the winter months. \$16.00 was granted by the Department of Education to qualified teachers to buy the necessities. Tomatoes were canned, and parents helped with food supplies. (Milk, rice, soup bones, vegetables, etc.)

Two older pupils were assigned the task of preparing the food for 40 students and the teacher, and they worked on a point system. They were permitted to ask the teacher any questions without losing points, but if the teacher had to tell them an important fact that they had neglected to ask, they lost points. A prize was given at the end of the year to the winner of the most points. The two students on duty were responsible for washing the dishes afterwards and this took about 20 minutes. One day one of the boys caught a rabbit, so they skinned it and had rabbit stew that day for noon meal. (Mrs. W. A. Metler - former student, River Road)

Coon Road was surrounded by woods on three sides - an ideal nature study location. In the early 1900s-1920 searching for the delicious edible chestnuts was a favourite sport at noon. (Due to disease, this chestnut grove has disappeared) ... Writing or scratching their names on the large fungi that were plentiful in the woods, and the many nature identification games provide many happy memories. (Coon Road, Mrs. Ethel O'Connor Gagen, former student and teacher at Brayne's).

In the early days of the brick school, the water in the creek near the school was so clear and clean that you could drink it. (Coon Road, Mrs. Herb Jackson)

The continuation school for S. S. #6, #20 was in Dutton, (approximately 6 miles from Iona Station) and winter meant transportation with a team of horses or cutter. The horses were left at the livery stable near the school, ready for the return ride. When the drifts were high, they would go over the top of the rail (snake fences)... bells ringing, heavy clothes, warm robes....food, fun. (Mr. Harvey Kendal)

In 1876, the man teaching at the time asked my grandfather if he would send his son William to school for a few days. He had 99 pupils, and wanted to be able to say that he had 100 in his school. William was four years old at the time. (S.S. #19, #26, #20.....Wm. G. Blewett)

In the 1930s, Wilfred Johnston was the teacher for nine years. Many recall his first enjoyable Christmas Concert, which lasted until one o'clock in the morning. (Mrs. Johnston has been Vice-Principal of West Lorne High School for several years) Joan House, S. S. #11

In 1876, the cost of educating 50 pupils for one year was \$427.21. In 1955, the cost of one elementary pupil was \$210.00. In 1970-71, the cost of educating one elementary school pupil is stated at \$600.00. (History of Southwold Township and School Sections....N. Morris)

UPDATE FROM THAMES VALLEY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD: The cost to educate one elementary pupil per year in 2015 is \$9,600.00.

School Act of 1816 specified a grant to be allowed for a school where 20 or more students would be attending. The Township or District could apply for financial assistance, but it was not to exceed \$100.00 per school. School Sections were to be formed and numbered. No portion of a School Section could be more than three miles to the schoolhouse. No section to be formed that contained less than 50 students between the ages of five and twenty-one. Sections could be formed by taking parts of two townships or a town and township. Those Sections would become a Union Section. (The School System of Ontario....C. W. Ross)
S. S. #19, #26, #20 contained students from three townships - Southwold, Yarmouth and Westminister, which are in two Counties

The Common School Act of 1816, stated that all teachers must be natural born subjects of Great Britain or have taken the Oath of Allegiance. Such a provision was intended to be an effective means of curbing the practice of hiring American teachers with their, "pernicious" ideas and "deleterious influence". (Canadian Education: A History by Wilson, Stamp, Audet)

In 1847, Southwold had 16 schools and in 1855, there were 19 schools. (Annual Report of Schools)

During the earliest days of school, the alphabet was passed on a shingle which was nicely whittled out, and from it the scholars were taught. (A Pioneer History of Elgin County, 1896)

HISTORY OF THE BELL

by Clarence Culver, Fingal

The bell weighing 300 pounds, and made of cast iron and alloys is 30 inches in diameter, and is 26 inches high, with a circumference of 94 inches. It has a rope pull over a 30 inch wheel, and the clapper has a built in guide.

It first rang out to summon the congregation to sacred services in the Methodist Church in the village of Fingal on Lot 10, adjacent to and just East of the present Presbyterian Church.

In 1898, the Church became a school, and the bell commenced its new duties. Not only did it call the students, but it was a reminder to the local people within hearing, as a check of the hour.

In 1912, the bell was moved to the belfry of the new Fingal school, S. S. #12 which was a half mile East of Fingal. This school was destroyed by fire, but the bell survived. Next it was mounted on the school built in 1918 on the same location.

Now in 1971, the bell freshly polished has earned this place of distinction, attractively mounted at the front of Southwold Public School.

ADDENDUM 2015 by Elizabeth Thompson

In April of 2013, during construction of the new FDK wing at Southwold Public School, the bell was relocated approximately 24m southeast, closer to the school entrance. A new platform slightly smaller than the original was reconstructed as close in appearance as possible to the original. The bell was sanded and polished to be remounted in it's newest location.