

## **HISTORY OF SILVER LAKE DISTRICT (School District No. 6)**

*This speech was prepared and delivered by Nellie Dettling at the final meeting of the Silver Lake School PTA in 1953.*

*Word processed by Bonnie Mitchell, July 2005.*

In the summer of 1831, James Hill followed an Indian trail from Saline to Manchester and settled on a farm later owned by John Alber. We think of it as the Robert Schiller place on Pfaus Road now owned by the R. M. Hochstetler's. James Hill built a log cabin on the same place where their orchard now stands. He cleared the land and sowed five acres of wheat that fall. He raised the first barn and has the honor of being the first settler of Freedom Township. Jason Gillette came that fall and settled on the farm where Nathan Allen Alber now lives. Antoinette Gilbert was the first child born November 6, 1831. In 1833 and 1834 George Hohenberger and Edward Polhemus came. George Dettling, who settled in 1848, was a farmer and mason.

Benjamin F. Burnett made scriptural exhortation at Mr. Hill's home in 1832. The first ordained minister was Elder Frederick Schmid whose first sermon was 1835 at the residence of William Schulte. Mr. Schulte was an uncle of Mrs. Erwin Haeussler's.

The Catholic Church which stood at the corner of Koebbe and Bethel Church Road was built in 1858 at a cost of \$3000 and dedicated to Saint Francis de Borgia by Bishop Le Fivere. In 1873 the parochial house, a neat brick structure, was built at a cost of \$2000. In 1881 the congregation numbered 200.

Jason Gillette owned the first blacksmith shop which stood on the four corners just east of the school. It was later sold to Charles Vogel and then to Christ Glatz. A wagon shop was owned by Mr. Breihter who lived where Mrs. Mary Hieber now lives.

Three saloons were in the district. One was located where Edgar Little lives, one at William Glatz's and C. Vogel who settled in 1863 on Mrs. Jacob Glatz's farm operated a hotel and saloon.

A post office and store were located on the northwest corner of Bethel Church and Schneider Roads. It was operated by Mr. Eckert. The district in the early times took in much more territory than today. From early records the following were some of the residents. Hiram Hower, Hanson and James Hill, Morris Graver, Francis Maine, Edward Polhemus, Jason Gillette, Patrick Clary, Stephen and Jacob Merithew, Isiac Magoon, Battsford Perrin, Oliver Sanford, Henry Goodyear, Heath Calkins, Frederic Haeussler, Joseph Davidter, Joseph Wise, George Dettling, John Feldkamp, John Berg, John and Henry Koebbe, Jacob Braun, Lambert List, Charles Vogel, and Peter and Gustab Weis.

The old map shows some houses in the district which are not standing today. A house stood across from Nathan Brown's. The Lima Center Road extended across Bethel Church Road, and Conrad Lindenschmidt lived in a brick house at the end of this road, now just a lane on the Ralph Haeussler farm.

There was no house across the road from Blumenauer's lake. The home of Conrad Hildinger was on the west side of Ernst Road halfway between Bemis Road and Pfaus Road. Blumenauer's Lake was formerly called Warner's Lake.

Here are some interesting facts about some of the people who have lived in our district:

James Hill became a member of the legislature.

Adam Gehringer, the grandfather of Charles Gehringer, once lived on the farm where the Nathan Alber's now live.

### School District No. 6

The first school in our district was established in the home of James Hill, whose farm was located where Hochstetler's now live. By 1837 the settlement was large enough to consider the building of a school house. The District was organized on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of October 1837. The following officers were elected:

Edward Polhemis, Director

Fransis Maine, Moderator

Jason Gillette, Assessor

A motion was made and seconded that no school be built the present year.

On January 13, 1838 it was voted to build a school and locate it in the center of the District East and West. Jason Gillette gave the land for the building.

This building was to be 20 x 29 feet, sealed up to the windows and lathed and plastered overhead and on the sides. There were to be 7-10 light windows. The furniture consisted of three movable benches. In 1838-1839 the school was kept three months by a man and six months by a woman.

On October 12, 1840 a meeting was held at the schoolhouse and a resolution adopted to move the school from the present site and locate it near the four corners west of Dr. Magoon's farm, now Walter Blumenauer's home. This farm provided parts of sections 27 and 34 be attached to the district by the Board of School Inspectors. This moving was to be completed by November 11, 1840, but had to be extended to Dec. 7. Each man was to be allowed 5 shillings per day for each yoke of oxen for assisting in moving of the building. It was also voted to keep school ten months - four months winter term, starting Nov. 23, and six months summer term from April to October. The Director was to purchase a suitable book for the use of the district. Each family was to furnish half a cord of wood per scholar delivered when notified by the teacher, or pay 6 shillings per cord to the officers for furnishing the same. School meetings were always held at 6 o'clock P.M.

In 1858 it was voted to purchase the site for the schoolhouse (where the school now stands) of Edward Polhemus for \$25.00. In Sept. 1859 they voted that \$150.00 was to be raised for the purpose of building a schoolhouse. A committee of six was appointed to make the arrangements. The committee was George Dettling, John Feldkamp, John Berz, Henry Berz, Henry Goodyear, William B. Dean, and Edward Polhemus.

On February 6, 1860 the old schoolhouse was sold to Fredric Haeussler for the sum of \$ 24.50. It was used for the dining room, when the house where Erwin Haeussler now lives, was built. Two dollars a day was allowed for building the new school and \$2.50 for extra work.

The building was built of bricks which were obtained from Milan. One of the last things that John Feldkamp, being one of the committee, did was to help draw the brick. Mr. Feldkamp lived where the Elmer Dettlings now live. He died when Mrs. Erwin Haeussler's father was 4 ½ years old. In 1875 blinds and steps were made for the school at a cost of \$7.87. The hall was added at a later date, probably about 1905.

Silver Lake borders the school grounds and therefore our school was called Silver Lake School.

The interior of the schoolroom has changed considerably from former days. A round oak stove stood in the middle of the room. Benches extended along all sides. The scholars took turns using the desks and benches for writing. Then later double desks were added. These were replaced in 1946 by new single desks, which are now being used in our new school District No. 1 (Pleasant Lake Consolidated School). A shelf in back of the room held the lunch pails and library books in the hall. Kerosene lanterns were replaced in the late twenty's by electric bulbs and these were replaced in 1946 by fluorescent lighting.

The old organ was replaced with a piano. We had a victrola which was purchased from the late Dr. Mayer, pastor of Bethel Church. In 1945 we had our first radio which was replaced in 1950 by an FM radio (\$40.37). This enabled our scholars to participate in the annual Festival of Song Program at Ann Arbor. The old roller towels were replaced by paper towels. A sanitary water fountain (\$13.00) replaced the pail and dipper and a porcelain sink eliminated the common wash basin. Our library contained over 370 books, some a hundred years old. In 1945 it was ordered by the Board of Health to build new toilets and drill a well.

For repairing the school one record shows \$6.00 was voted to be spent for repairs. In 1851 a broom cost 18¢, a dipper 15¢, a pound of nails 6¢, and a days work for mending seats 50¢. The Director was to furnish the glass for windows which were broken, the broom and chair bottoms and charge the amount to the next school year. One bill in 1857 that amounted to \$5.93 was settled for in eggs. The first well on the school grounds was driven in 1945 by the Paul Well Drillers of Chelsea.

The first record of buying wood for the school was in 1872 when \$25.00 was spent for wood. In 1875 it was delivered by Jacob Brown for \$16.00. Before this time, a half a cord of wood was furnished by the parents for each child attending school. In the minutes of one meeting, it is stated that this was to be good wood cut to a suitable length and be delivered by November 1.

For cleaning the school in 1859 it cost 50¢. In December 1874 Martha Dettling and Joseph Brimeier each received \$1.00. In 1952 it cost \$20.00.

Two thirds of the public money was always voted to be applied to the winter term and one third to the summer term. In 1884 J. R. McLean taught three and one half months at \$12.50 a month. A Miss Bigelow taught summer school for \$1.75 a week. In 1895 the school year started on November 5 and ended June 21 with one day vacation each for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day, Washington's Birthday, Good Friday, and Decoration Day.

About 1871 fifty to sixty scholars were attending school. As late as 1911 there were 42 in attendance during the winter months.

The teachers who have taught at Silver Lake School are:

James Hill, first teacher	L.E.Guinan	Whitney Palmer
J. R. McLean	Elizabeth Lehn	Clayton Parr
Isabella McFarlin	Lelia Bond	George Becker
C. R. North	Frank Dettling	Gottlieb Jacob
F. Danford		Bertha Ernst (Blumenauer)
A.H.Crane, teacher and director		
Day Conklin	Lillie Dettling	Caroline Stoffer
Miss Bigelow	F.L.Feldkamp	Blanche Lewick
Annie Hudson	Ed. Dresselhouse	Josephine Hess
Wm. B. Dean	Emma Widmayer Sloat	Gladys Harris
J. R. Butler	Annie Brannick	Helen Kobliske
E. E. Smith	Robert Kraft	Bernadette Walsh
Alice Thorne	Jessia Shafer	Florence Ehnis
Thomas Flynn	George Jedele	Ina Feldkamp (Haeussler)
Edward Mair	Louise Schmid	Mary Cash (Weber)
Earl Coulson	Kathryn Merz	Ethel Brown
Matt Flynn	Bertha Landwehr	Linda Atchinson
Earl Guinan	Emma Schaffer (Bertke)	Eva Allen
		Alma Jacob (Trolz)

In 1945 we purchased seats from the Manchester High School for \$22.00. A set of Encyclopedias from R.E.Compton for \$55.45.

In 1946 it was voted to put in new lights. They were purchased from McGee and McGuire for \$210.00

A broom now cost \$1.50  
The electricity cost \$10.00 per year  
Fire Insurance \$2.50  
Michigan Mutual Wind Insurance \$2.43

In 1948 it was voted to paint the school house and Ralph Haeussler was to order some playground equipment.

In 1949 the school officers' fees were raised. Director \$15.00- \$40.00  
Treasurer \$10.00- \$30.00  
Moderator \$5.00- \$20.00

In 1950-51 we paid the Manchester High School \$554.16 for tuition.

We received between \$2.00 and \$8.00 a summer for boat rent.

In 1951-52 our State Aid amounted to \$314.00  
State Primary Fund \$439.11  
Library Fund \$29.97  
State Sales Tax \$424.83  
Cleaning School house \$20  
Census \$6.00  
Teacher's Salary ( including retirement) \$1501.50

On February 14, 1952, school electors in six districts voted for consolidation (154 to 19). On Monday March 3 at eight o'clock the electors of the newly Consolidated Pleasant Lake School District voted on a new five member school board. The new district includes Dresselhouse, Pleasant Lake, Irish, St. Thomas, Kuebler, and Silver Lake. The legal name assigned by the board is District No. 1 Freedom Township. More than 150 qualified electors from the six districts involved in the consolidation were present and voted. The six school houses were put up for sale. Mr. and Mrs. Galinis and family of Detroit purchased our school for their future home. We are sorry to say they couldn't be with us today.

Of course this is present and future history now. Today we are celebrating the past. To some of you who were born here and others who have always lived here it will be as long as forever. I would like to quote a few lines in memory of our district and the fellowship that had been ours.

We shall remember you as long – as there are fields of snow – and there are flowers in the ground – that have the strength to grow – as long as there are stars above - and moonbeams on the sea - and just as long as there are songs – of love and memory. We shall remember you today – and dream of you tonight – and look for you tomorrow when – the sun begins to light. Whatever season, month or year – this much will be the same – the sound of joy will be – the mention of Freedom District 6. We shall remember you as long – as there are earth and sky – and all the time eternity – may take to say goodbye.