

journal more attractive to institutional libraries. As part of our efforts to expand the visibility and accessibility of the journal, *The Michigan Archaeologist* is now also listed in the EBSCO research database that is used by many colleges and universities. In an effort to make up lost ground and bring the journal back up to date the next issue will also be an omnibus issue that will include several volumes worth of articles. While, the next issue will go far in catching the journal up to date, it will also nearly exhaust our backlog of articles. So, in closing, we will follow in the footsteps of our editorial predecessors and make a plea for the membership to write-up the sites that they have excavated and/or collected and submit materials to us for publication.

Respectfully,

Sean B. Dunham
Michael J. Hambacher
James A. Robertson
Co-Editors
Commonwealth Cultural Resources Group, Inc.
Jackson, Michigan 49203

Summer, 2008

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MICHIGAN'S ONE ROOM SCHOOLS

April M. Beisaw

Abstract

The application of traditional archaeological survey methods to one-room schoolhouse sites often results in meager artifact assemblages dominated by architectural artifacts. As a result, many schoolhouse sites have been lost to development. The archaeological investigation of two historic school sites provide examples of how the excavation of schoolhouse sites, combined with archival and architectural analyses, can be used to recover the long history of individual schools and their communities and contribute to the educational history of Michigan.

A significant number of Michigan's one-room schoolhouses can still be found scattered throughout the state, more than 70 of which are listed on the State Register of Historic Sites. Many of these extant buildings were preserved by landowners or saved from demolition by concerned individuals or preservation societies. Saving a schoolhouse often means that a new use for it must be found. To this end, Michigan's schoolhouses have been modified to serve such functions as private residences, shops, art galleries, museums, childcare facilities, offices, and storage buildings (Figure 1). In many cases the schoolhouse has been moved from its original foundation to a new "safer" location, yards or miles away.

While the structures that remain provide a valuable link to the educational history of Michigan, the history held by Michigan's one-room schools has yet to be tapped. The surviving structure itself is only one component of a schoolhouse site. The schoolyard with its auxiliary structures (woodsheds, garages, privies, wells, etc.) and play and refuse areas are an important part of the schoolhouse context. These features contain evidence of the dynamic history of schools, reflecting decisions of where, when, and how to build and maintain the school made by each

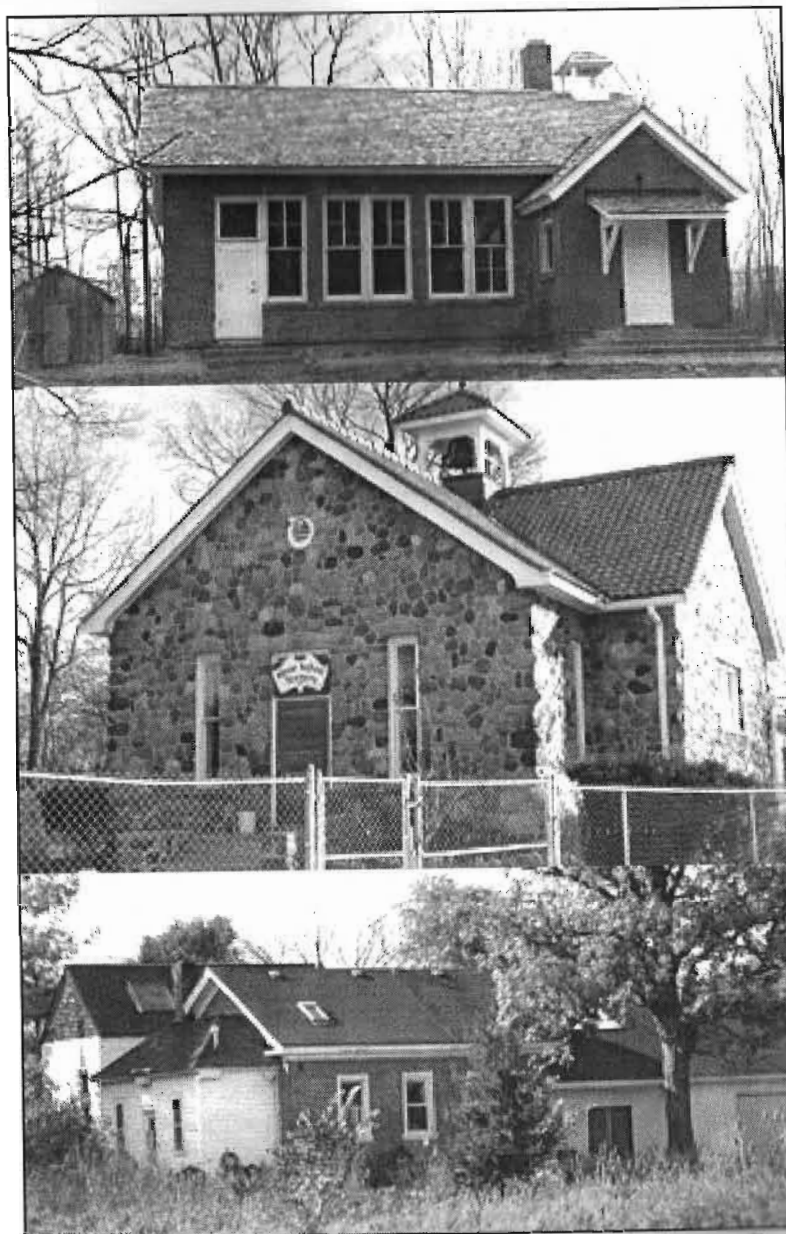


Figure 1. Examples of modified schoolhouses from Washtenaw County: (Top) Popkins School, (Middle) Stone School, (Bottom) Sutherland School.

community. The schoolhouse is likely to have undergone many a renovation and even a rebuilding or two from its earliest founding until its closing, adapting to the needs of its students and regulations imposed by government officials. An extant schoolhouse, therefore, should be seen as the endpoint of the history of a school, not the starting point.

The earliest documented archaeological study of an American schoolhouse site dates to 1973 when Brenda Barrett and Vance Packard excavated the Camp Schoolhouse at Valley Forge National Historical Park in Pennsylvania (Barrett and Packard 1973). The earliest reported excavation of a Michigan one-room schoolhouse site dates to 1998. As a Master's thesis project, Valerie Hartzer excavated an area of the Merle Beach School property (20CL275) (Figure 2) and concluded that the sampling strategies employed were inadequate to provide a comprehensive view of site structure and usage patterns (Hartzer 1998:72). Hartzer's analysis and conclusions were not unlike archaeological



Figure 2. Merle Beach School circa 1905 (Photo courtesy of Bill Loomis).

studies of schoolhouse sites in other states. Plagued by low artifact counts and assemblages dominated by architectural remains, archaeologists have had difficulty identifying research questions that could be answered through the excavation of these sites (Bigelow and Nagel 1987; Catts, et al. 1983; Connolly and Schablitsky 2003; Gibb and Beisaw 2000; Napton and Greathouse 1997; Peña 1992; Schoen 1986).

The archaeology of schoolhouse sites has been hindered for one simple reason: the methods used, while adequate for the study of domestic sites, are not conducive to studying schoolhouse sites. These sites intrinsically have a low rate of artifact deposition. Imposition of schoolhouse and yard maintenance as a form of discipline and the paucity of refuse created at a schoolhouse leave little for archaeologists to find. Systematic shovel testing of schoolyards is unlikely to result in an assemblage that shows spatial patterning, and may not even provide an assemblage large enough for standard statistical analyses.

The solution for schoolhouse archaeology is not to seek out the most obvious locus of daily deposition, the privies. The search for the privies can be a labor-intensive process and, once found, are unlikely to produce artifacts that provide significant insight into the educational history of the property, especially if they were periodically cleaned. New methods and research questions need to be developed to deal with these unique sites and the types of artifacts that they contain. To this end, a brief overview of the history of Michigan's educational system is presented here, along with the results of two archaeological case studies. These results indicate that excavations guided by archival and architectural analyses and oral histories can recover the histories of these institutions and provide a means for studying the communities that they served.

MICHIGAN'S EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

No known evidence exists of the operation of schools in Michigan until around 1755. Under the French, education was a function of the Church as there was no semi-independent local organizational structure, like the incorporated towns of New England, to provide management and support for schools (Putnam 1904:2). The first "schoolhouse" in Michigan appears to have been the Detroit residence of Jean Baptiste Roucout on St. Jacques Street where he conducted classes after 1760 (Reigle 1971:154). At the same time, many other "subscription schools" or "select schools" were held in the homes of teachers that obtained a subscription for their employment. Subscribers paid a type of tuition; students furnished their own books and sometimes firewood or candles. Roucout's became the first schoolhouse when church trustees purchased the building in 1765 "with the provision that it should be used as a school" (Reigle 1971:154).

In 1809 the legislative Council for the Territory of Michigan passed the first law to establish a school system in the territory. This act called for each district to layout school districts within its boundaries and established a tax system to fund them. However, there is no evidence of districts or schools being organized under this act (Putnam 1904:5). In August of 1817 the territorial government passed an act forming the University of Michigan and a complete school system for the territory. Under the provisions of this act the University and a governor-appointed board controlled the schools and public involvement was limited to paying taxes. Some primary schools opened in Detroit, Monroe, and Mackinaw under this act (Putnam 1904:7).

An 1821 statute transferred authority to establish and manage schools from the University faculty to a board of trustees and repealed the general tax to support schools, leaving school funds to come from lands devoted to education or from private donations (Putnam 1904:9). After several failed attempts to remedy the situation, Governor Lewis Cass asked Congress to reorganize the governing body of the Michigan Territory in 1823. The new legislative council met in Detroit on June 7, 1824. This

meeting resulted in Section 16 of every township, as previously stipulated by an act of Congress in 1804, being leased to support public schools (Reigle 1971:160).

An 1827 law established common schools in the Territory and made these schools independent from the University. "The statute of 1827 was essentially a reproduction of an early school law of the Massachusetts colony, with some features borrowed from New York, and was not well adapted to the condition of the Territory or the habits of the people" (Putnam 1904:12). It required townships of more than 50 families to support a school. Education in either French or English was allowed and school was to be in session for six months a year. The number of students in a township dictated the duration and structure of the school year. For example, townships with over 200 students were required to employ a grammar school master to teach French, English, and Latin for 12 months. As such, grammar school was equivalent to an academy or high school and offered secondary education including university preparation (Putnam 1904). However, townships could vote annually not to comply with this law, and they did (Putnam 1904:12).

Despite these legal advances towards an organized school system, many townships failed to organize school districts even as late as 1835. That year John D. Pierce, often referred to as the "father of the Michigan school system," was appointed to office as the first Superintendent of Public Instruction. Pierce traveled through the eastern United States, to study established school systems. Upon returning to Michigan he presented his plan for the organization of schools, including detailed building plans. Each school district was given the power to erect and furnish school buildings and a library and to levy taxes for these purposes. Townships had the power to elect a board of school inspectors whose responsibility was to inspect the schools and teachers, divide money received from the Primary Interest Fund and taxes, and to report annually to the superintendent of public instruction (Reigle 1971:166).

To simplify the formation of schools, the 1846 school code allowed townships to form a single union district school from two

or more districts. The pooling of resources that union schools allowed for led to the establishment of several such schools in Michigan between 1846 and 1850. The pace of their creation slowed in 1849 when an amendment to the school code required districts to have at least 100 students before becoming a union school (Putnam 1904:77).

This slow implementation of Pierce's plan is evident in the Michigan Constitution of 1850. Article XIII, Education Section 4 states that

The legislature shall, within five years from the adoption of this constitution, provide for and establish a system of primary schools, whereby a school shall be kept without charge for tuition, at least three months in each year, in every school district in the State: and all instruction in said schools shall be conducted in the English language (Putnam 1904:30-31).

In 1871 the State Legislature passed "An act to compel children to attend school" which required those between the ages of eight and 14 to be sent to public school for at least 12 weeks per year, six of which must be consecutive. Parents or guardians were to be fined \$10 for the first offense and \$20 for each additional offense. Enforcement of this law was fairly uncommon, as the School Inspector Reports for each district document. Changes in 1883 and 1885 increased required attendance to four months, forbade employment of children under the age of 14 unless they attended the required school term, and made violation of the law a misdemeanor (Putnam 1904:124).

International discussions among educators and philosophers about the benefits of universal education, pedagogy, and the physical plants in which students were taught lead to further changes in state school laws. Schoolhouse architecture and schoolyard landscaping figure prominently in educational literature of the nineteenth century, most comprehensively and influentially through the published work of Henry Barnard (1970[1848]), whose approach to the physical environment of schools appeared in

annual reports for school and county boards of education nationwide throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In the introduction to Barnard's reprinted book, the editors summarize Barnard's approach and its implications for researching educational history:

Architectural designs for schools are among the best sources, short of direct observation, for discovering what actually happens in a classroom. Any well-designed school should embody what is to go on within it. The designer takes into account the number, age, and character of the students and the instructional techniques the teacher will probably employ; hence the differences between individualized instruction, group recitation, the monitorial system, and departmentalized schooling are palpably exposed in the layout of classrooms designed for their use [McClintock and McClintock 1970:1-2].

In his 1850 report, Ira Mayhew, Michigan School Superintendent, advocated the consultation of Barnard's book prior to the construction of schoolhouses (Mayhew 1850:382). Interestingly, Barnard had cited Mayhew's 1847 report on the condition of Michigan Schools as an example of the poor conditions of schools:

In architectural appearance, school-houses have more resembled barns, sheds for cattle, or mechanic shops, than Temples of Science, -windows are broken-benches are mutilated-desks are cut up-wood is unprovided-out-buildings are neglected-obscene images and vulgar delineations meet the eye without and within-the plastering is smoked and patched-the roof is so open as to let in a flood of water in a storm, sufficient to drown out a school, were not the floor equally open [Mayhew 1848 as cited in Barnard 1851:25].

To help school districts construct adequate buildings the State of Michigan began issuing standard plans for schools in the 1896 Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education. Additionally, in 1914 the Michigan Department of Public Instruction issued recommended specifications on the size of the school lot and the types and quantities of furnishings and apparatus that schools should contain.

A few important points should be evident from this historical overview. First, schools predating 1827 are rare and outside of such urban centers as Detroit, are more likely the result of local initiative than governmental mandate. Second, local implementation of Pierce's plan varies between 1835 and 1850. During this time period many school districts constructed or renovated their schools according to standard plans, using tax levies not previously available, and appointed school inspectors whose records are currently available for review in the Archives of Michigan. Third, the implementation of mandatory education between 1871 and 1885 likely led to another series of renovations as schoolhouses needed to accommodate more students, as well as many older students. Lastly, Michigan school architecture and furnishings were not standardized until after 1896, and likely led to additional renovations of schools and schoolyards. Although not covered here, many twentieth century modifications to one-room schools were the result of the installation of utilities.

As illustrated above, the history of a one-room schoolhouse and its schoolyard should be seen as a dynamic one. One-room schoolhouses and their attendant yards retain evidence of local initiative (or lack thereof) and of changes in regulations, sources of revenue, and scholarly theories of pedagogy. In the remainder of this paper I explore how schoolhouse excavations provide windows into the educational history of Michigan and the unique histories of the communities served by those schools.

CASE STUDIES

Two Michigan one-room school sites were chosen to test the potential for archaeology to provide new insights into the

histories of these schools (Beisaw 2003a, 2003b). Both school sites are in Washtenaw County and both have extant schoolhouses preserved as museums. The Blaess School Site (20WA370) is in Lodi Township and the Town Hall School Site (20WA375) is in Pittsfield Township. The author excavated both sites, with the assistance of volunteers from the Huron Valley Chapter of the Michigan Archaeological Society, Saline Area Historical Society, Saline Area School Preservation Committee, Pittsfield Township Historical Society, the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure & Recreation (SOLAR), Michigan State University, and the Ann Arbor Girls Middle School.

To provide a local context for these sites, historical information regarding the educational history of the county and both townships was obtained and is provided below. In order to guide the archaeological field methods chosen for each site, additional historical sources were used. In the case of the Blaess School, an extensive review of the School Inspector Reports was undertaken at the Archives of Michigan. Several past students of the school and their descendants also provided information on the use and layout of the school property. In the case of the Town Hall School, a detailed history compiled by a former student, Hannah Geddes Wright, proved invaluable.

Washtenaw County's Educational History

In 1867, John D. Pierce became the Washtenaw County Superintendent. A brief article from the June 29, 1867 issue of a local newspaper, the *Ypsilanti Commercial*, provides a report of his initial impressions and plans:

We have a communication from the County Superintendent, John D. Pierce. We give the gist. His duties began the 1st of May. A herculean [sic] task is imposed in such a thickly populate county as Washtenaw. 200 schools to be visited — condition of school-buildings—libraries to be noted—lectures to be given, and institutes to be organized. The Superintendent is determined to discharge

to the letter his duties. 50 schools have been visited. And with only four exceptions the schools are in better condition than he anticipated. There is an evil in the multiplication of classes. In one instance, 13 in arithmetic, one in each. This evil arises from the diversity of books. We hope the Superintendent will succeed in correcting this evil. Our children have not finished a class book, much less familiar with it, before a new book appears on the stage, and the parent is commanded to buy it. We believe teachers are remunerated for every change. If not, they are often-times sadly cheated. It is an outrage. Teachers and parents the victims of publishers and booksellers. He proposes to visit the schools in the Eastern part of the county during the summer term, and during the year to hold in different parts of the county three Teacher's institutes.

Having the "father of Michigan education" as the Washtenaw County Superintendent may have lead to the glowing review of the county schools that can be found in Everts and Stewart's 1874 atlas of Washtenaw County. The atlas contains the following history of schools in the county:

We have not given a full picture of the past of Washtenaw County until we have briefly sketched the history of her educational interests, for which she stands pre-eminent.

The first facilities the County enjoyed in this direction were "select schools," like that which Miss Hope Johnson taught at Woodruff's Grove in 1826-7,—generally the assembling of a few small children in the teacher's own house. A school was opened in Ypsilanti in 1825, and Miss Olive Gorton (now wife of Lyman Graves) was its first teacher. The first school-house proper was the one erected at Ypsilanti in 1829, and known as "The Brick." Five years later a "Young Ladies Seminary" was opened in the same place, in a room over Vanderbuilt's shop.

The pioneer school-houses were mostly constructed of logs, during the decade of 1830-40. The first in Sharon, near "Row's Corners," erected in 1832, was one of the earliest frame school buildings in the County. The first school in Freedom Township dates from about the same year. In 1834, Augusta's first pedagogue officiated in their primitive log district school-house. That of Lydon was erected in 1837, in which John Yocum held the first *licensed* school of that town, although Miss Angelina Green taught in a private house prior to that date. The first school-house in Ann Arbor was built about 1827, and Miss Sallie Clark taught in it.

...The present status of the common school system in this county may best be gathered from the following facts, furnished us by the County Superintendent, Mr. G. S. Wheeler. There are 166 districts in the County and over 10,000 children attend the schools held in nine stone, forty-seven brick, one hundred and twelve frame, and five log school-houses. The County now has provisions for seating nearly 13,000 pupils. The value of school property is \$368,054. There is also in the County seven graded schools. To carry on these schools ninety-six male and two hundred and eighty-five female teachers are employed. Total expenditures for the school year of 1872 were \$131,229.26 [Everts and Stewart 1874:18].

The Blaess School

The school now known as the Blaess School (Figure 3) was established as the Lodi District 13 school. Lodi Township was formally organized on March 7, 1834, although early settlers arrived around 1826 (Chapman 1990:1275-1276 [1881]). According to the History of Washtenaw County

The first school-teacher was Miss Polly Stratton, who presided over an assembly of children of the township in a room of one of the dwelling-houses in the district, from 1827 to 1829. The first log school-house was erected in 1829, where the frame school-house now stands, on the plains... (Chapman 1990:1276 [1881]).



Figure 3. The Blaess School after removal from its original site for preservation.

In 1941 Florence Ashfal, an eighth grade student, wrote a history of the Blaess School. This history places the construction of the school to circa 1871 and suggests that at the time of construction it was named the Downer School. William Blaess is then credited with making significant improvements to the school and its yard during the fourteen years that he served as school director (1899-1913): "He found the school in bad condition. There was a large hole in the school ground which he had filled. He then

had the yard graveled, bought a set of wall maps, put a fence around the school, put in new seats with iron sides, the others had wooden sides, and improved it in many ways" (Ashfal 1941). In the 1930s the school saw another revitalization:

The old woodshed was torn down, and a new garage, woodshed and inside girls and boys sanitaries was built. The old school was resided, before this time it was painted red, and now it is painted white with green trim. The yard was regreveled and the fence repaired. The teacher's desk used to be on a platform 8 or 10 inches high, between two doors, and an old stove was in the back of the room. Now [1941] we have a modern furnace, three new singe seats, a new recitation seat, a fumed oak desk, a new set of maps, scales, volleyball, sandtable, water cooler, and a library room. Electric lights have been installed in recent years [Ashfal 1941:2].

The Blaess Schoolhouse appears on the 1874 Everts and Stewart map of Lodi Township (Figure 4) and the 1915 *Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County* (Ogle 1915) (Figure 5). Blaess, along with other schools in the Lodi School District, closed due to consolidation in the 1950s. Since closing, the Blaess School building underwent minor remodeling for use as a farm storage building. The building served this function until June 20, 2002, when it was relocated to Saline to serve as a museum and education facility.

School Inspector Reports. A review of the School Inspector Reports for the Lodi School District produced some interesting data that both supported and substantially revised the existing history of the Blaess School. The reports revealed that the building known as the Blaess School was constructed sometime between September 1867 and September 1868 (Washtenaw County School District 1857-1931). More importantly, the Blaess School was constructed after a predecessor burned during the 1867 school year.

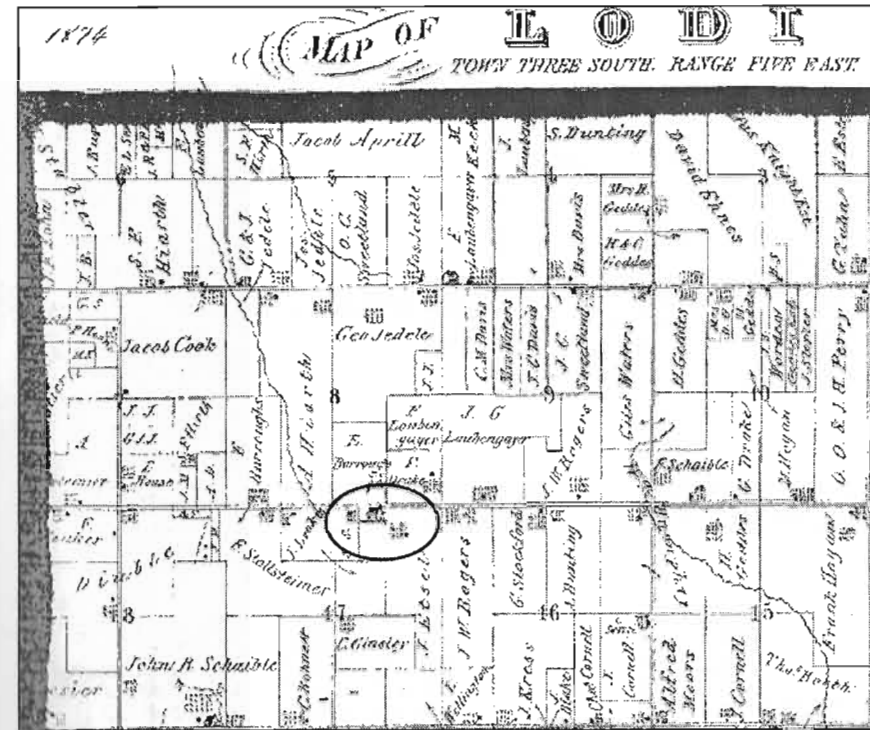


Figure 4. 1874 Lodi Township Plat showing the Blaess School (circled).

According to the reports, the Lodi school district supported several primary schools as early as the earliest reports were made, the school year of 1859-1860. Lodi District 13, the Blaess School employed two teachers, one male and one female, to teach several months of school to 47 students in 1860. The frame school building was valued at \$350 in the 1866 report and at \$800 on the 1868 report (Washtenaw County School District 1857-1931). The 1867 report lists the school's construction type as "burned" and the space for the value of the building is blank. No attendance or teachers are listed for the 1868 school year.

Also evident from the School Inspector reports is the degradation of the Blaess School that was noted in Ashfal's 1941 history of the school. The value of the Blaess School is listed as

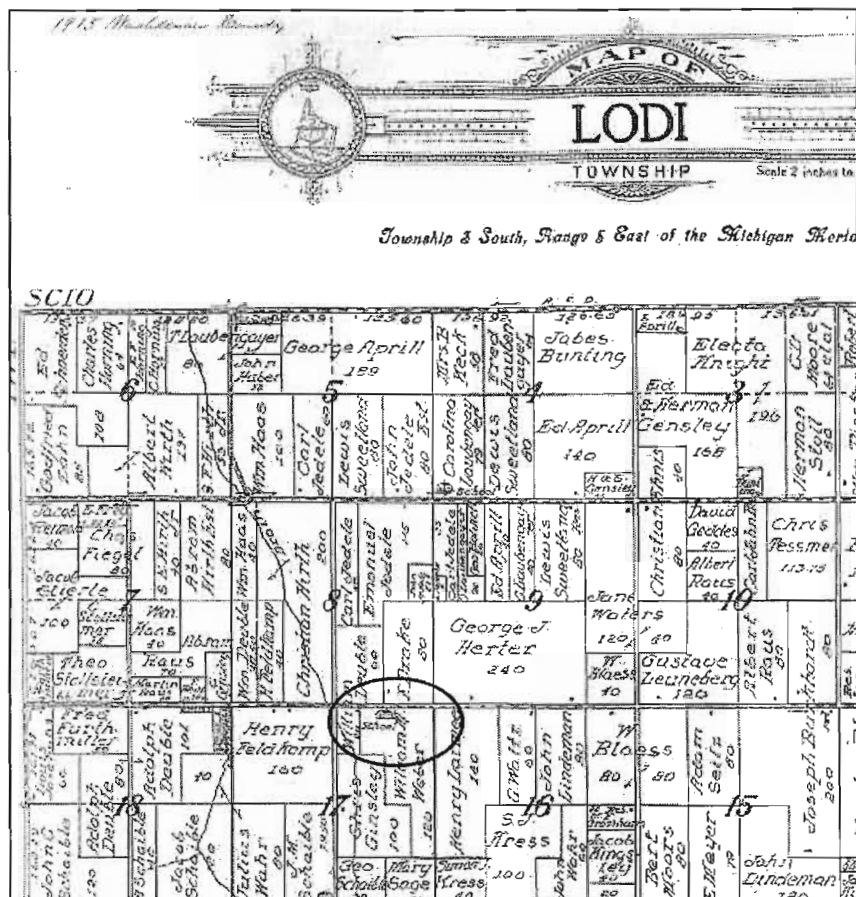


Figure 5. Section of 1915 Lodi Atlas showing Blaess School (circled).

\$600 for the years 1875-1890. The value then drops by 50 percent, down to \$300 in 1891. The Inspector reports do not list William Blaess as the school Director until 1901 (as opposed to the 1899 date previously cited) and improvements were not evident in the value of the school until 1905.

Excavation. A total of six shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated within the Blaess schoolyard (Figure 6). Soils were fairly consistent across the site, however STPs 2 and 4, located on the northern side of the site, contained a six-inch layer of light

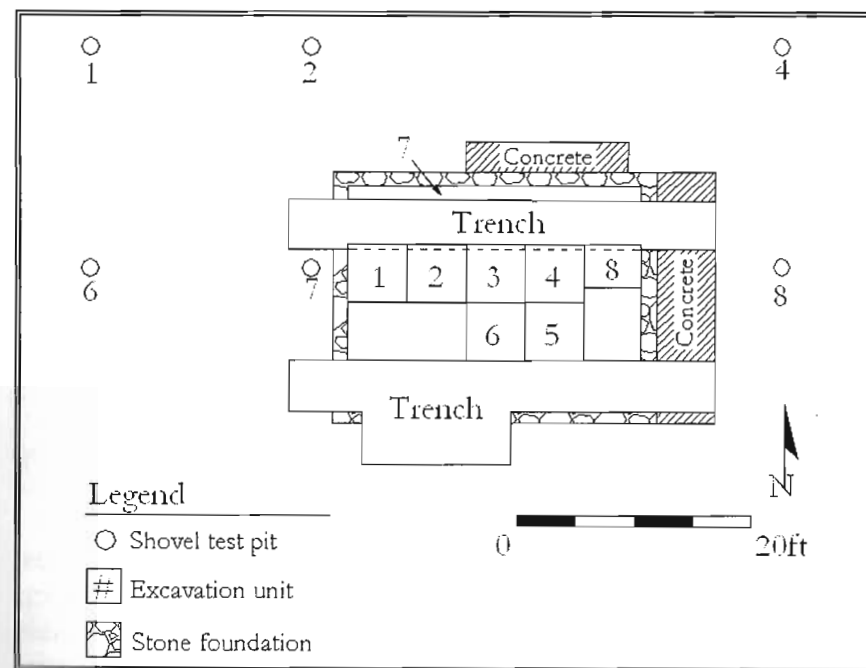


Figure 6. Blaess School Site Map.

brown sand with pea gravel. This pea gravel likely represents that used during the gravelling of the school yard described in the school history as occurring in 1900 and 1930 (Ashfal 1941). Plans to strip the schoolyard down to the gravel were made, in an attempt to delineate the extent of the schoolyard in the early 1900's. Unfortunately this phase of the excavation was not undertaken due to time restrictions.

Shovel testing of the schoolyard yielded 34 historic artifacts including one slate pencil, three nails, 18 glass fragments, four charcoal fragments, one animal bone, three coal pieces, one metal strap, and three brick fragments. The nails included one wire nail and two machine-cut nails. All glass fragments appeared to be modern window glass. The small number of shovel tests and low density of artifacts recovered preclude statistical evaluation of artifact distribution.

The recent removal of the schoolhouse provided an opportunity to conduct excavations within the school's foundation. In addition to the shovel test pits in the schoolyard, a total of eight, approximately 25-one square foot units (2.3 square meters) were excavated within the 20 ft by 30 ft (6 m by 9 m) foundation (Figures 6 and 7). Despite disturbance by the recent removal of the structure, an eight to ten inch (20.3 cm to 25.4 cm) deep deposit of charcoal rich soil was encountered in all units (Figure 8). The high density of charcoal, melted glass, and burned nails was an unexpected find, the archival research not yet having been completed, and reports of the school's burning undiscovered. This charred layer represents the remnants of the 1857 frame schoolhouse, which burned in 1867. The extant schoolhouse had been rebuilt on the original schoolhouse foundation, preserving this deposit until the 1868 schoolhouse was removed from the site in 2002.

A total of 9,076 artifacts were recovered from the charcoal rich deposit (Table 1). The diversity and number of artifacts recovered attest to the potential for schoolhouse sites to contain evidence of a range of activities. In this way, the Blaess School site has provided a unique glimpse into the contents of an 1860s rural one-room school. The unexpected fire that claimed the 1857 structure created the artifact rich deposit, but it was the unusual decision to rebuild the school using the original, now fire-cracked, stone foundation that protected and preserved the deposit for 135 years.

The most recognizable nineteenth century schoolhouse artifact, the slate pencil, is well represented in this assemblage. Coincidentally, the 49 fragmentary and complete slate pencils (Figure 9) closely approximate the number of students in the district at the time of the fire, 46, documented in the School Inspector Reports. Fragments of slate tablets, on which the slate pencils were used, are also quite common in the assemblage. The stoneware inkwells (Figure 10) show that some amount of ink writing occurred at the school, but given the small number of wells recovered (three), it is likely that only the teacher and possibly older students used ink. Also of interest is the fact that the smallest



Figure 7. Post-excavation view of Blaess School foundation.



Figure 8. Layer of charred soil identified within the Blaess School foundation.

Table 1. Artifact Totals for Eight Excavation Units at the Blaess School Site.

Artifact Type	Subtype	Count	Weight (g)
Writing Implements	Slate Pencil	49	74.8
	Pencil Lead	7	1.5
	Wood Pencil	4	3.3
	Drawing Compass?	1	5.6
	Slate Tablet	470	941.2
Buttons	Glass	9	7.6
	Shell	5	4.1
	Metal	2	1.2
	Plastic	1	0.5
Beads	Bead-Unidentified	1	3
Tobacco Pipe	White Clay stem	6	18.1
	White Clay bowl	2	1.4
Ceramic	Stoneware	21	194.2
	Earthenware	2	2.3
	Ironstone	4	40.7
	Pearlware/Whiteware	15	47.7
	Porcelain	2	14.4
	Vessel Glass	102	342.3
Glass	Window Glass	339	1193
	Melted Glass	595	3877.2
	Unidentified	4	1.7
Nails	Machine Cut-Complete-3"+	292	2523.3
	Machine Cut-Complete-2.5"	955	5771.8
	Machine Cut-Complete-1.5"	1605	6059.5
	Machine Cut-Complete-1.25"	724	1065.5
	Machine Cut-Fragment	1998	4661.9
	Wire-Complete	45	189.2
	Wire-Fragment	5	17
	Tack	2	0.9

Table 1 (continued). Artifact Totals for Eight Excavation Units at the Blaess School Site

Artifact Type	Subtype	Count	Weight (g)
Metal-Other	Cylindrical Hinge	4	109
	Hinge-Other	1	141.4
	Pocket Knife -Fragments	2	42.5
	Straight Pin	4	0.6
	Safety Pin	1	0.8
	Thimble	1	0.3
	Screw	11	36.9
	Washer	1	1.1
	Wing Nut	1	6.4
	Wire	15	41.8
	Flat	56	172.9
	Copper	10	24.5
	Unidentified	137	2710.1
	Charred Wood (Sample)	469	737.5
	Coal	4	40.4
Other	Brick (Sample)	67	976.2
	Lithic	4	23.5
	Shoe Leather	1	9.2
	Mortar (Sample)	14	31.7
Faunal	Unsorted bone	1034	1154.8
	Snail Shell	5	1.6
Totals		9109	33328.1

unbroken slate pencils were approximately one-inch (2.5 cm) long, suggesting that this may have been the shortest usable length for children and that these resources were not ordinarily discarded while still usable.

Fragments of ceramic plates, cups, and bowls displayed a range of decorative patterns (Figure 11) suggesting that these items were an ad hoc collection, possibly donated items. Medicine

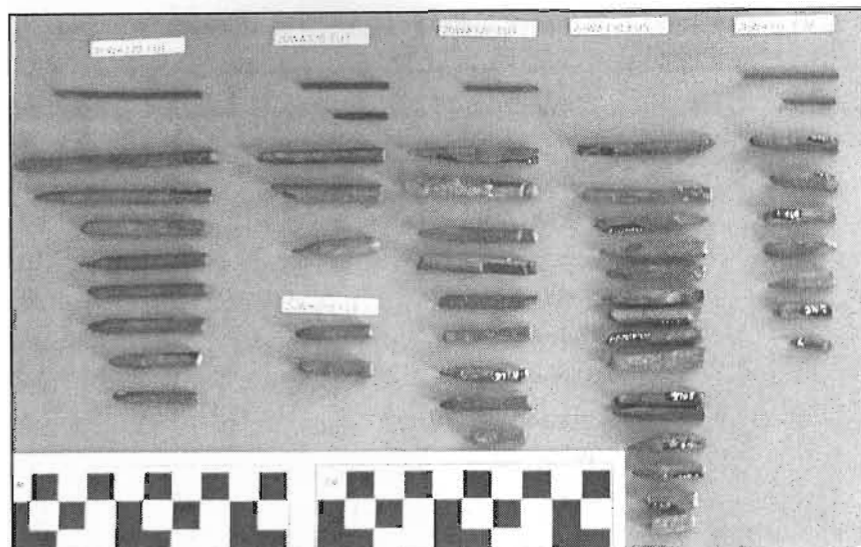


Figure 9. Slate pencils and graphite pencil leads (top two rows) recovered from six Blaess excavation units.



Figure 10. Stoneware inkwells recovered from Blaess School.

bottles (Figure 12) included a Dr August Koenig's Hamburger Tropfen (Figure 13) bottle, an alcohol and beef bullion mixture, and suggest that some amount of dosing occurred at school, an activity not commonly discussed in the schoolmarm diaries and other reminiscences of life in a country school. Buttons and pins (Figure 14) suggest that mending of clothing was another common

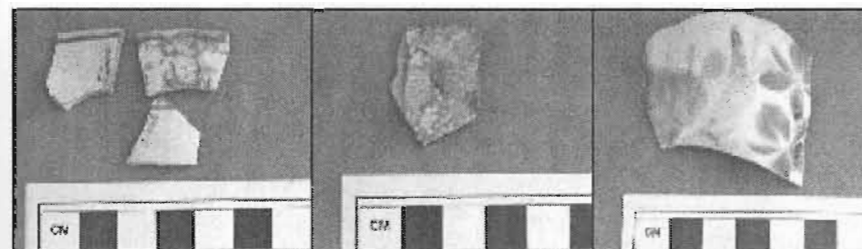


Figure 11. Sample of the diverse decorative patterns on Blaess ceramics.



Figure 12. Medicine bottles recovered from Blaess School.

schoolhouse activity, whether for educational, recreational, or emergency purposes. Tobacco use, whether by teacher, student, or construction worker, is also evident by the recovery of fragments of at least six pipes (Figure 15). The doorplate (Figure 16) of the burned school was recovered near the center of the foundation. The presence of a keyhole on the doorplate was a surprise to some current community members who envisioned their schoolhouse as a building that was always accessible to the public.

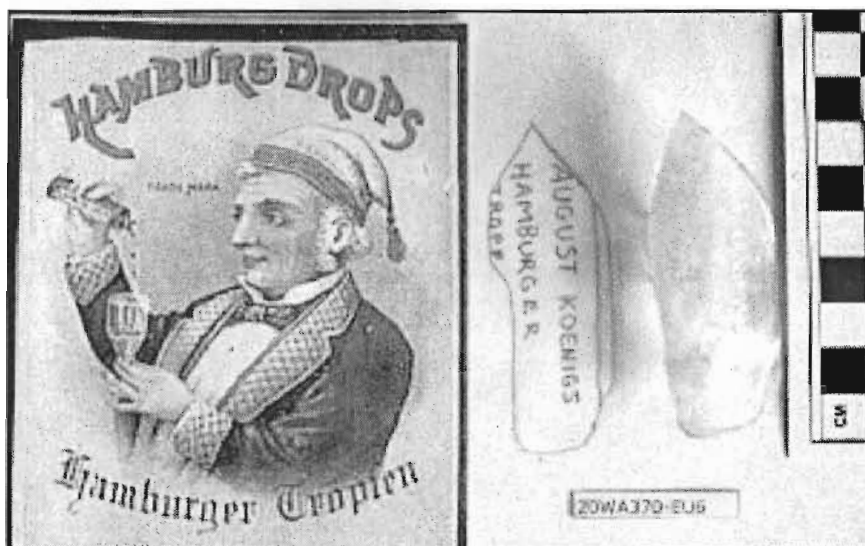


Figure 13. Advertisement for Dr. August Koenig's Hamburger Tropfen along side a sketch of the recovered bottle fragment and the fragment itself.

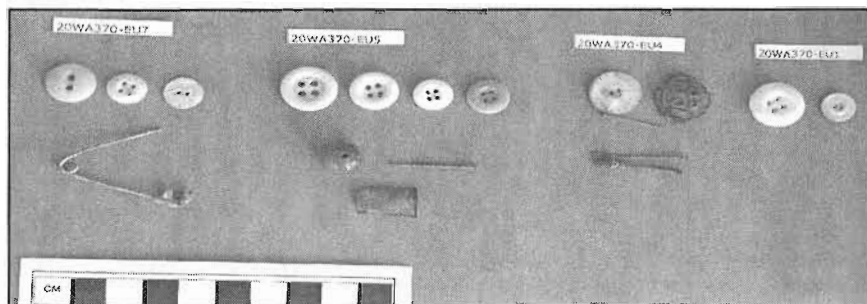


Figure 14. Sewing artifacts recovered from the Blaess School.

Other than an extensive network of animal burrows, the only feature identified within the foundation during the excavation was a central pile of mortared stone (Figure 17), which likely served as a support structure or stove chimney base. The recovery of stove parts in this area suggests that a central stove heated the school. This area also had a higher density of charred material and may be the source of the fire that destroyed the 1857 schoolhouse.

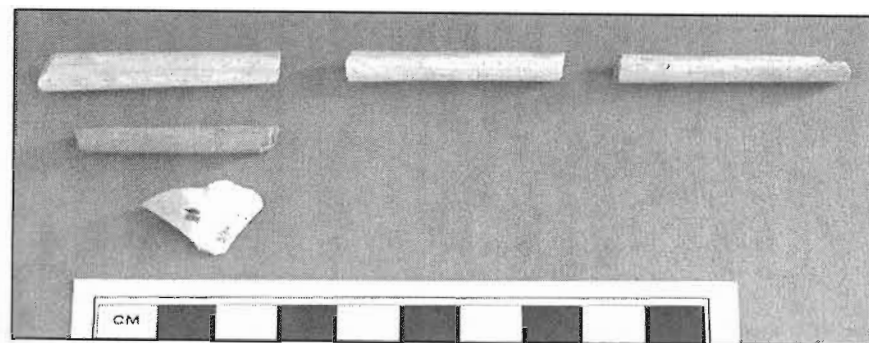


Figure 15. Smoking pipe stems and a bowl fragment recovered from the Blaess School.



Figure 16. Doorplate recovered from the Blaess School.

Town Hall School

The Town Hall School was located in Pittsfield Township. The *History of Washtenaw County* (Chapman 1990:1255 [1881]) presents the following history of Pittsfield schools:

To Pittsfield belongs the honor of having erected the first school-house in Washtenaw county. It was erected in the summer of 1825 and was built of logs. In 1876 several of

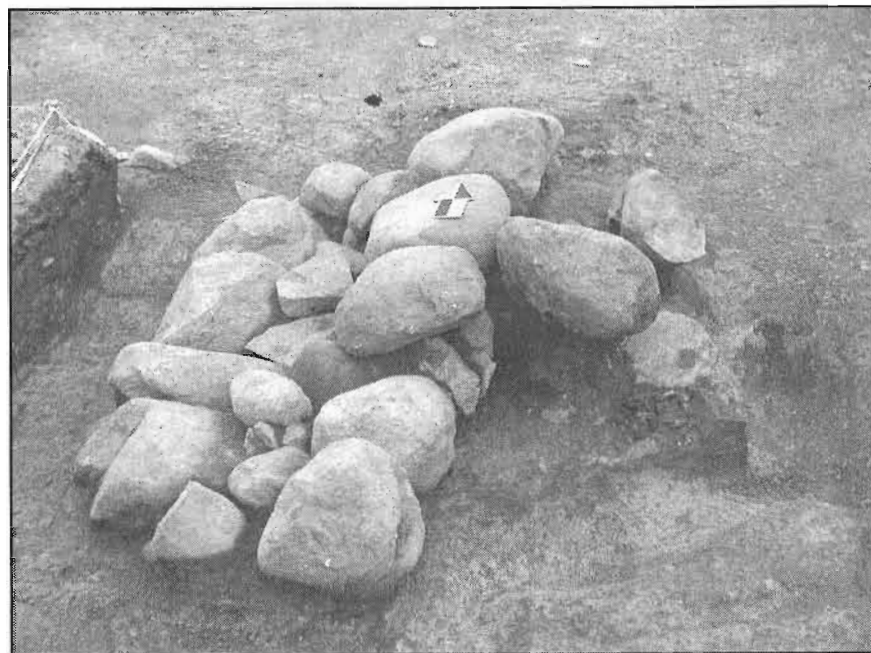


Figure 17. Central support structure within the Blaess School foundation.

the old logs were lying upon the lot where the house once stood. They were taken, sawed up, and converted into canes, many of which are now owned by men and woman, who, as boys and girls, received their regular floggings in connection with and as part of their education in that old school-house. On the completion of the new building, a Sunday-school and a week-day school, instituted by Miss Harriet Parsons, was transferred from the shades of a venerable oak that had withstood the storms of a hundred years, to the new school-house.

The settlement of boundaries of school districts was one of the most difficult things to adjust. A movement in one part of the town would interfere with the prospects in other parts, thus setting in motion the diversified interests of all. The question finally became settled, resulting in the formation of three whole and six fractional districts.

This claim of Pittsfield Township having the first county schoolhouse contradicts the history presented in the 1874 county atlas (quoted above). The atlas account suggests that the Pittsfield Township schoolhouse was that of a "select school" and therefore not the first true public schoolhouse in the county. By 1845 the school districts of Pittsfield Township were well organized as is evident from a report in the May 12, 1845, issue of *The Signal of Liberty*, a local newspaper. This article lists "suitable books to be used uniformly in all the schools in the town."

The history of the Town Hall School (Figure 18) presented here largely derives from the 1996 *Down the Myrtle Path: The History and Memories of the Town Hall School* by Hannah Geddes Wright. Records of town meetings document discussions as to the need for a new district schoolhouse starting in 1847. At that time, the District 7 schoolhouse (later renumbered District 3) was a frame building, constructed before 1838. On September 29, 1851, a unanimous vote decided that the new district school would be constructed on the William Geddes farm.

A contract with A.I. Eggleston to work on this schoolhouse was dated August 4, 1852, and in September of the same year the foundation was laid. As director of the school, William Geddes kept memoranda of cost of materials and of labor as well as the names of individuals contributing to their time and toil. For example, stonework for the foundation and three porches cost \$11.62. Payment for 32,400 bricks for main walls and gables came to \$33.50. A man named Terry "plastered the Chimney" for two dollars, while Horace Carpenter furnished one thousand feet of white wood lumber for ten dollars. In 1853 and '54, William Crab did the necessary painting. John Tyler charged \$1.75 for hauling timbers and scaffolding poles. Samuel A. Morgan hauled mortar, water, and bricks, and Leonard Tyler received \$13.00 for "attending the bricklayers [Wright 1996:9].



Figure 18. The Town Hall School now located on the campus of Eastern Michigan University.

At its 1853 annual meeting the school board decided to “finish the schoolhouse” and build privies (Wright 1996:19). Between 1852 and 1853, \$565 was paid for building costs. In 1855, the board voted to erect a woodhouse with two privies, and raised \$90 for this purpose. A paper entitled *A History of Town Hall School*, found among the records of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society, provided important information on the location of the 1852 schoolhouse; “It stood about 5 or 6 feet away from the east fence” (Wright 1996:103).

The 1852 brick Town Hall School served District 7 until a new frame schoolhouse was constructed in 1895. In that year \$677.50 was paid for the new schoolhouse and the older brick school was demolished. The new frame Town Hall School served its district until its closure in 1957. In 1987, the extant schoolhouse was moved to the campus of Eastern Michigan University in

Ypsilanti where it was restored and renovated and now serves as a museum and educational facility.

Excavation. Sixteen shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated (Figures 19 and 20) within the schoolyard. Just over one thousand artifacts were recovered, although 72 percent of this assemblage was in the form of brick and mortar. Soils were fairly consistent across the site, with the exception of areas of brick and mortar on the eastern portion of the site. STP 3 and 4 (Figure 20) encountered the most complete bricks, in association with mortar, strongly suggesting that remnants of the original brick school remained on-site and near that location. Coal was encountered in many STPs and increased in density towards the southeastern corner of the site, suggesting the location of a coal pile behind the brick school. General artifact density (glass, ceramics, metal) also increased along with the coal. Gravel was encountered in the northwestern area of the site (STPs 16 and 17). This is the known area of an historic gravel driveway. The driveway and associated gravel may also account for the lack of artifacts in this area; the area was likely graded prior to graveling and then kept clear of refuse.

Two 5 ft by 5 ft (1.5 m by 1.5 m) excavation units were judgmentally placed within the shovel test pit grid to further test the demolition debris encountered by STP 3, and the dense coal area around STP 5. A third 5 ft by 5 ft excavation unit was placed 20 ft (6.1 m) to the east of STP 4 in an attempt to identify the eastern boundary of the brick school. This location was chosen based on the observation of slight changes in ground surface topography.

A total of 1,075 artifacts were recovered from the three excavation units (Table 2). A small number of slate pencils and slate tablet fragments were recovered, primarily from the demolition debris and the coal deposit. While the pencil and slate from this area is almost certainly from the 1852 school, those from the coal pile may be from either schoolhouse. The area of the coal deposits contained a wide variety of artifacts. Fragments of ceramic and glass vessels, including at least one likely medicine bottle, were recovered from what should be the rear of the school-



Figure 19. Excavation of the Town Hall School site. Note the lack of surface features.

house. Nails and larger metal artifacts may be from a variety of building and modification episodes and may not relate to the demolition of the brick schoolhouse as little mortar or brick was found in this area. Instead, many of the artifacts appeared slightly melted or burned which suggest that the area was a regular active disposal location for both coal and refuse.

Within the coal pile several fragments of at least three medicine vials were recovered. Beyond stories of Castor Oil, little record of the regular use of medicines exists in the vast collections of one room school reminisces. As such, this topic is of significant interest to archaeologists as even small fragments of embossed medicine bottles can provide the vital clues to identify the original contents. In the case of the Town Hall School the only identifiable medicine bottle recovered from this fieldwork was a "Dr. Kilmer's/ Swamp Root/Kidney Liver/and Bladder Remedy/Binghamton NY" (Figure 21). This "medicine" was marketed as a cure all (Wald

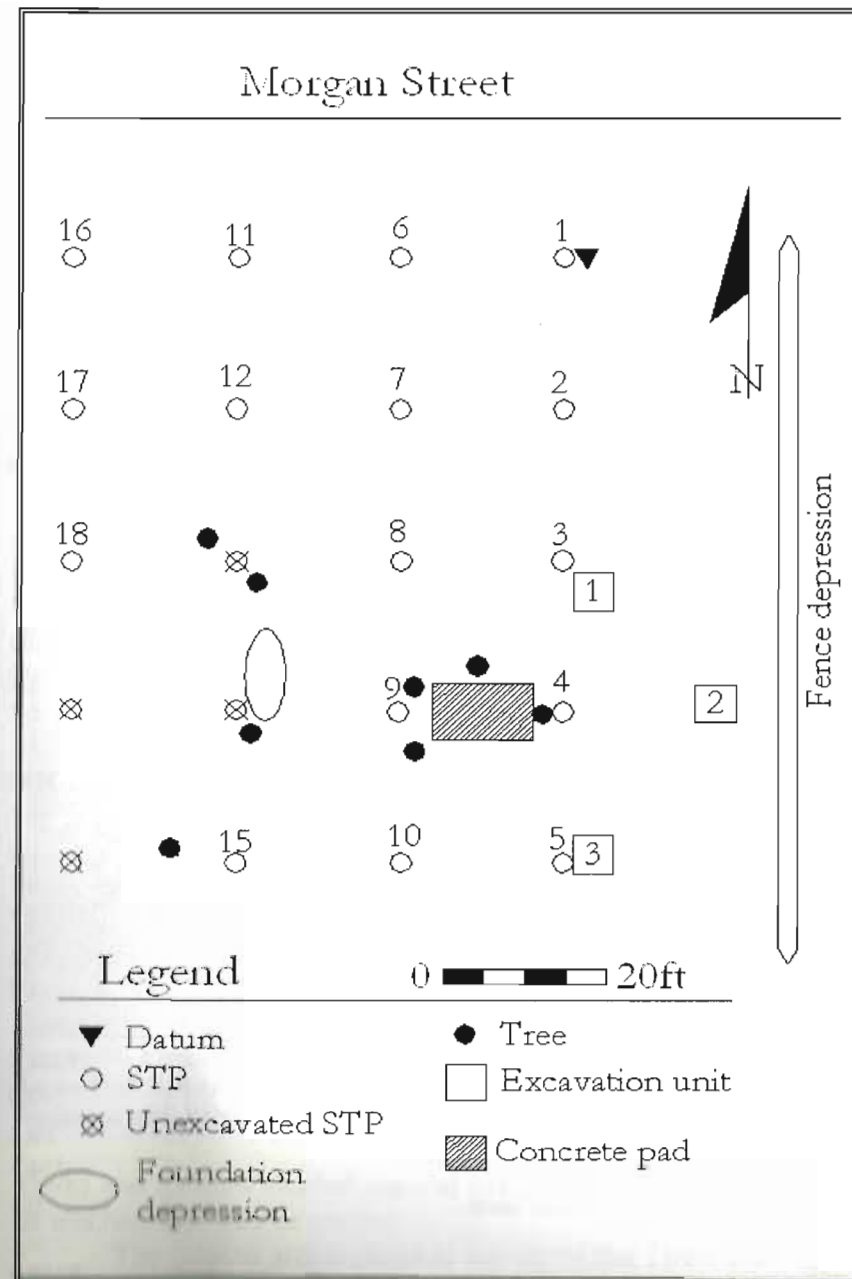


Figure 20. Town Hall School site map.

Table 2. Artifact Totals for Three Excavation Units at the Town Hall Site.

Artifact Type	Subtype	Count	Weight (g)
Writing Implements	Slate Pencil	3	6.5
	Chalk	1	1.7
	Slate Tablet	23	46.7
Button	Glass	2	3.0
Tobacco Pipe	White Clay	1	1.1
Ceramic	Porcelain	4	11.7
	Ironstone	1	2.2
	Pearlware/Whiteware	40	71.8
	Other	2	33.7
Glass	Vessel Glass	79	232.2
	Flat Glass	256	328.9
	Melted Glass	1	2.8
	Marble	1	6.3
Nails	Machine Cut-Complete	65	122.5
	Machine Cut-Fragment	96	158.5
	Wire-Complete	202	302.6
	Wire-Fragment	103	94.4
Metal-Other	Staples	3	1.8
	Hinge	3	131.1
	Lead	1	10.0
	Snap	1	1.5
	Tack	2	1.9
	Wire	2	10.7
	Other	2	8.7
	Unidentified	11	27.1
	Mortar	37	483.7
Other	Coal	57	509.1
	Brick	43	1944.2
	Stone	3	240.0
	Lithic-Flake	18	69.6
	Mammal	9	374.5
Faunal	Snail Shell	3	0.4
Totals		1078	5240.9



Figure 21. Fragments of a Dr. Kilmer's Swamp Root bottle recovered from Town Hall School. Top fragment is embossed with DR KILMER, bottom fragment with BINGHAMTON; where Swamp Root was made.

1998) and its high alcohol content may have “settled” the students or teacher, one way or another.

The limited archaeological testing of the Town Hall School site provides a small window into the one hundred years of education-related activity that has occurred on the site. This project

was successful in delineating the exact location of the original brick structure (Figure 22) and recovering some architectural and educational artifacts from both the 1852 and 1895 schoolhouses. While the coal deposit is an artifact rich area, it obviously contains a mixture of artifacts from different time periods. While few indications of different dumping episodes were observed during excavation, analysis of the stratigraphic profile suggests that with careful excavation some additional separation of strata may be possible.



Figure 22. Excavation Unit 2 of Town Hall School. The western portion of the unit contains the remains of the brick school foundation.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Blaess and Town Hall Schools were both relocated for preservation purposes prior to archaeological excavation. Excavations at both sites provided a wealth of information that further developed the history of each school. Both schoolhouses

are not the first ones built on their sites and archaeological excavation was able to recover remnants of the earlier burned and demolished schoolhouses. However, in both cases, archaeological investigations were based solely on shovel test pits excavated in the schoolyards, the sites would have yielded meager assemblages of mainly architectural remains. By tailoring field methods to the unique histories of each school obtained through detailed archival research significant archaeological remains were recovered from both sites.

In the case of the Blaess School, School Inspector reports were used to verify that the earlier burned structure, first identified archaeologically, was also a school and to clarify the sequence of building improvements and directorship suggested by the existing school history. In the case of the Town Hall School, a previously compiled history of the school, by a former student, was used to determine the likely locations of outbuildings and differentiate the remnants of their foundations from that which likely represented the earlier schoolhouse. The Town Hall School coal pile also served as a valuable source of artifacts for the extant school and its predecessor.

The archaeological excavation of schoolhouse sites needs to be informed by the state and local educational histories that dictated the dynamics of this institution. Local histories should be used to guide archaeological study but should not be taken as fact. Significant densities of artifacts are unlikely to be recovered from schoolyard excavations, unless a feature such as a coal pile is identified. Assemblages dominated by architectural artifacts need to be evaluated in terms of renovations occurring with changing legislation and/or the remnants of earlier school structures. Where possible, excavation should be undertaken within building foundations, even if the area has been significantly disturbed by the removal of the structure.

The results of archaeological investigations can be invaluable to a preserved school's ability to convey its history. Historical archaeology's ability to combine archival and oral history sources with the artifacts and architectural remains and interpretations of land use can recreate the dynamic history of the

sites. For the preserved schoolhouse museum, recovered artifacts can provide specific examples of the types of furnishings and personal items used in the school. Beyond slate pencils, tablets, and inkwells, artifacts such as fragmentary hardware can be combined with suggested school plans and patents to speculate on the furnishings and layouts of schoolhouses in earlier years. School inspector reports can attest to certain furnishings not likely to be recovered through excavation, such as pianos and wall maps. Inspector reports can also be used to determine the specific versions of textbooks used and range of subjects taught through the years.

The history of Michigan's one-room schools is yet to be told. Preserved schoolhouses are only the endpoint of the long history of each school and its district. Residents pooled resources to build early schools, decided what was important for their children, and modified the schoolhouse and schoolyard to meet their changing needs. The history of a school is more than the architecture of a preserved schoolhouse; the history of a school is as dynamic as the history of the community that it served.

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support of numerous people, primarily James G. Gibb, Wayne Clements, Ann Zinn, and Marcia Ticknor. Members of the following organizations provided assistance with this research; the Huron Valley chapter of the Michigan Archaeology Society, Saline Area Historical Society, Saline Area School Preservation Committee, Pittsfield Township Historical Society, the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure, and Recreation (SOLAR), Michigan State University, and the Ann Arbor Girls Middle School. Funding was provided by the Saline Area Historical Society and by Pittsfield Township. Hannah Geddes Wright provided much of the historical background for the Town Hall School project. Special thanks to Janet and Milton Weidmayer for allowing the excavation of the Blaess site on their property

REFERENCES CITED

Ashfal, Florence

- 1941 *The History of Blaess School*. Manuscript on file, Saline Area Historical Society, Saline, Michigan.

Barnard, Henry

- 1970[1848] *Henry Barnard's School Architecture, Or Contributions to the Improvement of School-House in the United States*. J. C. Derby, New York. 1970 facsimile ed. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York

- 1851 *Practical Illustrations of the Principles of School Architecture*. Press of Case, Tiffany and Company, Hartford, Connecticut.

Barrett, Brenda, and Vance Packard

- 1973 *Preliminary Summary Report on Excavations at Camp Schoolhouse*. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, and Valley Forge National Historical Park, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Beisaw, April M.

- 2003a *Phase I/II Archaeological Testing of the Town Hall School (20WA375), Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan*. Submitted to Pittsfield Township Historical Commission, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

- 2003b *Phase I/III/II Excavations of the Blaess School Site (20WA370), Lodi Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan*. Submitted to Saline Area Historical Society, Saline, Michigan.

Bigelow, Gerald F., and Brian L. Nagel

- 1987 *The Letchworth Park School, 1874-1946: Historical and Archaeological Investigations*. *The Bulletin*,

Journal of the New York State Archeological Association 94:1-25.

Catts, Wade B., Kevin W. Cunningham and Jay F. Custer

1983 *Archaeological Investigations at the Welsh Tract School, District No. 54, Newark, New Castle County, Delaware*. DeIDOT Archaeology Series No. 22. Delaware Department of Transportation, Dover.

Chapman, Charles C.

1990[1881] *History of Washtenaw County, Michigan*. Charles C. Chapman & Company, Chicago. 1990 facsimile ed. Windmill Publications, Mt. Vernon, Indiana.

Connolly, Thomas J., and Julie Schablitsky

2003 *Archaeological Investigations of the Valley View Site, Chehalem Valley, Oregon*. Report No. 2003-2. State Museum of Anthropology, University of Oregon, Eugene.

Everts, Stewart and Company

1874 *Combination Atlas Map of Washtenaw County, Michigan*. Everts & Stewart, Chicago.

Geidel, Richard, and Alan D. Beauregard

1997 *Archaeological and Historical Research: Marion School No. 9 Site, 18CE293, Cecil County, Maryland*. KCI Technologies, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.. Submitted to York Building Products Company, Perryville, Maryland.

Gibb, James G., and April M. Beisaw

2000 *Phase II Archaeological Site Examination of the Oella School (18BA475), Oella, Baltimore County, Maryland*. Andrew Garte & Associates, Shady Side, Maryland. Submitted to The Oella Company, Ellicott City, Maryland.

Hartzer, Valerie

1998 *The Merle Beach School Site (20CL275): An Assessment of the Archaeology of Rural Mid-Michigan Education During the Nineteenth Century and Methods for its Examination*. Master's thesis, Michigan State University, East Lansing. University Microfilms, Ann Arbor.

Mayhew, Ira

1848 *A Compilation from the Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan for the Years 1845 and 1846, with Important Additions, Embracing the Report for the Year 1847*. Bagg and Harmon, Printers, Detroit.

1850 *Popular Education: For the Use of Parents and Teachers, and for Young Persons of Both Sexes / Prepared and Published in Accordance with a Resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Michigan*. Harper Brothers, New York.

McClintock, Jean, and Robbie McClintock (editors)

1970 *Henry Barnard's School Architecture*. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York.

Napton, L. Kyle, and Elizabeth A. Greathouse

1997 *The Altaville Schoolhouse: Community and State Cooperation in Local Historical Resource Preservation*. CDF Archaeological Reports No. 19. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Sacramento.

Ogle, George A.

1915 *Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County, Michigan*. George A. Ogle and Company, Chicago.

Peña, Elizabeth S.

- 1992 Educational Archaeology: Historical Archaeological Investigations at Schoolhouse 12 in the Town of LeRay, Jefferson County. *The Bulletin, Journal of the New York State Archeological Association* 103:10-19.

Putnam, Daniel

- 1904 *Primary and Secondary Public Education in Michigan: A Historical Sketch*. George Wahr, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Reigle, John L.

- 1971 *Day Before History: An Autobiography and History of Michigan Schools*. T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., Minneapolis.

Schoen, Christopher M.

- 1986 *Excavations at the Freeman School (25GA90) Homestead National Monument of America*. University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Submitted to Midwest Archaeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Signal of Liberty, The [Ann Arbor, Michigan]

- 1845 Pittsfield School Meeting. 12 May. Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Wald, Stephen E.

- 1998 *Swamp-Root Makes Friends: The Persistence of Popular Demand for an Advertised Remedy during the Muckraking Era*. Manuscript on file, Broome County Public Library, Binghamton, New York.

Washtenaw County School District

- 1857-1931 *Annual Report of the School Inspectors of the Township of Lodi, County of Washtenaw, to the County Superintendent*. Manuscript on file, Archives of Michigan, Michigan Historical Center, Lansing.

Wright, Hannah Geddes

- 1996 *Down the Myrtle Path: The History and Memories of the Town Hall School*. H. G. Wright, Parma, Michigan..

Ypsilanti Commercial [Ypsilanti, Michigan]

- 1867 Report from John D. Pierce, Washtenaw County Superintendent. June 29. Ypsilanti, Michigan.