

EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2002

Eagle, Wisconsin

EHS Board

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EHS News

Donations

Many thanks to the following for donations received: Jean Bowey, Mary Crosswaite, Donna Fanshaw, Mabel Finney, Karen Kennedy, Jean Lewandoski, Bea Marquardt, Ken Mealy, Paul & Anne Trupke, Pam Wiedmeyer, and Marcie Winzenried.

Donation Wish List:

- Current and past business cards from Eagle area businesses
- Any type of fountain pen
- Pens and pencils with local business names/designs
- Any smoking-related items—pipes, cigarette cases, cigarette holders, lighters, ash trays, and advertisements (both pro- and anti-smoking)

For more information, contact Elaine Ledrowski at 594-3301.

Upcoming Events

Bake Sale: Don't forget the election day bake sale in the municipal building, Nov. 5 beginning at 7 a.m.

Raffle: The raffle has been rescheduled to Saturday, Dec. 7, beginning at noon. Donations of new and like-new items are welcome. The drawing will begin at 3 p.m. Call Irma Jolliffe at 594-2386 or Pat Wilton at 594-2294 for more information.

Board Meeting: Members are welcome at the board meetings, which are held at the museum on Main Street. The next meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m., November 16.

The Legend and Truth of Betsy Ross (alternate version)

By Jerry Johnson & Terry Boughner

"Would that it were true." President Woodrow Wilson, a writer of American history, was speaking about the story of Betsy Ross and the making of the first American flag.

As charming as it is, there is little or no evidence to support it. Historians place it in the same category as the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. The facts as they are now accepted are these:

When the Revolutionary War broke out, there were many different flags. Washington often expressed his preference for the Grand Union flag. This had 13 alternating red and white stripes with the British Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner. Independence came and then was declared. It became clear that the Grand Union flag would not suffice.

Some 94 years later, William Canby, the man who first told the story of Betsy Ross, said the stars and stripes were in common use by July, 1776. This is simply not true. There is no mention of the stars and stripes in Washington's writings of the time. We also know that this flag was not flown at the battles of Trenton and Princeton in early 1777.

According to the journals of the Continental Congress, in June of 1777, on a motion of John Adams, Congress passed the Flag Act. According to this, the flag was to have 13 alternating red and white stripes. There

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would be a blue field in which there would be white stars, one for each of the states. Since no design was specified in the Act, this was given over to Francis Hopkinson, himself a member of Congress, to do. This, by all accounts, is what he did. In the late summer of 1777, the British had sailed up the Chesapeake, intent on taking Philadelphia. Washington advanced to meet them. They would engage at what is called the Battle of Brandywine. One of the opening skirmishes of this battle was the Battle of Cooches Bridge in northern Delaware. It was there, as Delawareans proudly maintain, that the Stars and Stripes first saw fire.

The flag continued to evolve.

In 1794, Congress provided for 15 stars and 15 stripes. If you go to the Smithsonian Institution and see the flag flown over Fort McHenry in the War of 1812, you will see the "Star Spangled Banner" with its 15 stars and 15 stripes. As more states came into the Union, the flag became too unwieldy. In 1818, Congress cut back the stripes to 13.

It was not until 1912 that the flag was standardized. In that year, by an Executive Order of President Taft, the flag's proportions were prescribed. Up until then, the flag's design had been left to the discretion of the flag maker.

The story of Betsy Ross remains popular and widely believed. The reasons are not hard to seek. When, in 1870, Canby presented the story at a meeting of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the country was preparing to celebrate its centennial. The tale was charming and patriotic. Much like the stories of the Liberty Bell, Washington and the cherry tree, and other such legends, it caught the popular imagination.

After Canby's death, the Betsy Ross Memorial Association was formed. In 1893, a painting showing Ross and the flag was displayed at the Colombian Exposition in Chicago. There is even a Betsy Ross house in Philadelphia, and a postage stamp was issued to commemorate her supposed achievement.

The legend lives on. Why not?•

The Baker School, 1938-1946

By Richard Baker

Baker School stood on the southwest corner of the intersection of Bluff Road and O'Brien/Scout Road in the Town of Troy, Walworth County. This land, as well as the land on all sides of this intersection, was owned by John Baker, and subsequently by his descendants. John Baker and his wife and children came here from Cornwall, United Kingdom, in the spring of 1849. He purchased land from private individuals. The Cox, Chapman, Bottrel, and Underhill families were in the area at that time. I remember my father, Ralph Coombe Baker, born 22 March 1889, telling me that he had been told that a school had existed about 1/2 mile east of Baker School, on the north side of what is now Bluff Road. It was gone before 1856-1857. At the time I went to school there, from 1938-46, Baker School was also listed as Troy District Number 5. The land where it once stood is now owned by Robert Baker.

The school was a wood frame building with clapboard siding, built by Mr. Cox while he still owned the land. I do not know when the school was started or the date that it closed. Ward School was built in 1848 and Baker School was built after that (ed. note: per school board records, 1856). My grandfather, Richard Baker, who was born 26 January 1851, attended school there. I graduated from eighth grade in 1946 in a class of 3 with Faye Chapman and Keith Schlitz. I believe that was the last eighth grade class to graduate from the school. I believe it closed in 1947. The normal school year was from the day after Labor Day to just before Memorial Day.

The roof, originally wood shingle, was replaced in the 1940s with a reddish brown asbestos shingle. The building consisted of two rooms. The entrance hall stretched across the entire front of the building with a rod and shelf for coats and caps on the north end and a cupboard for supplies on the south end. Also on the north wall of the north end was a sink and a stand to hold the crock water cooler. There were two doors to enter the classroom from the hall, located near each end. The classroom had four windows, two on the south side and two on the north. Blackboards were located on the front (north) and rear walls of the room. A piano was located between the windows on the north side of the room. The coal/wood furnace was located in the northwest corner of the room. A belfry was located on the north end of the roof. The building



Back Row: Margie Sievers, Thelma Wickingson (now Mason), Joe Madison, Bill Sievers, Jerry Baker, Ed (Ted) Baker
Front Row: Spencer (Pete) Chapman, Jim Chapman, Gerry Lutz, Wally Chapman, Helen Arndorfer, and Mary Madison

Photo courtesy of Jerry Baker

was painted white, although I have heard that at one time it was red. There was a wood shed on the southwest corner of the school ground. To the west of that was the girls' toilet. The boys' toilet was in the northwest corner of the school ground. The school faced the east. The outside dimensions of the building, as I remember, were 16X24 feet. I tried to verify those measurements from the remaining foundation, and found it slightly smaller than that.

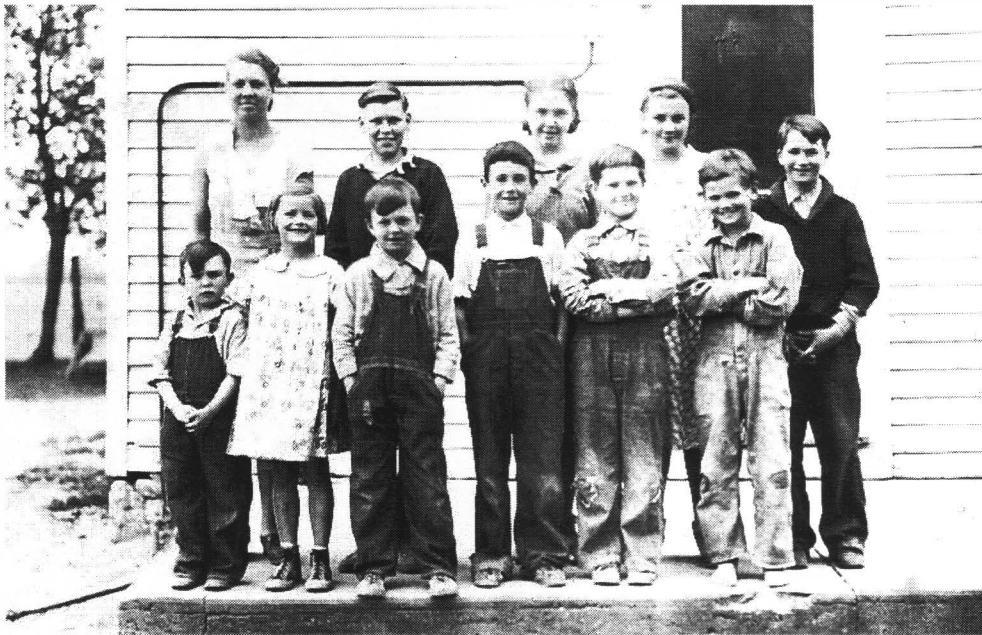
We were farm kids. We wore bib overalls or what we would now call jeans. We wore high work shoes and flannel or cotton shirts, dependent on the weather. We wore caps—mostly baseball type, but heavy wool with ear flaps in the winter. I always liked the winter cap that was leather and looked like an airplane pilot's leather helmet. Our winter coats were a variety—mostly mackinaw, some leather sheepskin, and some lined denim. In the winter we wore long underwear, and when small, wore long brown stockings also. Basically, we dressed about the same as we would to go out and do farm chores; however, we did not wear the clothes that we wore to school to work on the farm

until the school clothes had been replaced. We usually wore the same shirt and pants all week to school. By Friday they were dirty and probably smelled, but everyone did the same, so we didn't think anything about it.

The girls wore cotton dresses, or a blouse and skirt. In the winter time they wore snow pants to go outside. They wore headscarves, the triangular piece of cloth that ties under the chin. They wore heavy ones in winter and cotton ones on days when you still needed a coat. Long stockings, both brown and white, were worn in the winter and in the spring and fall, anklets. The most common shoe was the brown and white saddle shoe.

Most of the time everyone walked or rode bikes to school. On bad days we might be driven. On very bad cold days, when snow was deep, Dad would take us to school by horse and bobsled. This was easier than trying to get the car or tractor started. We brought our lunches: a peanut butter or meat sandwich, sometimes a jelly sandwich, a piece of cake or a cookie, and an apple or banana. Some-

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Back Row: Thelma Wickingson (now Mason), Warren Arndorfer, Margie Sievers, Virginia Perry, Jerry Baker
Front Row: James Chapman, Helen Arndorfer, Wally Chapman, Joe Madison, Billy Sievers, and Ed (Ted) Baker

Photo courtesy of Jerry Baker

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time in the '40s there was an attempt at some sort of hot lunch. In the fall and spring of the year, on nice days we would eat outside. Sometimes we would take our lunches down to the creek to eat them.

The school ground was not large enough to play softball on it, though at times we tried to play Work Up there. When we played softball, we had to go across the road into Levi Baker's field; some years we did not play because of the crop in the field. The playground equipment consisted of one swing, one set of rings, and one teeter-totter. We played Red Light-Green Light, Pump-pump Pull Away, Ante-ante over the schoolhouse, Fox and Geese, and Red Rover. In the winter we sometimes took our sleds and went sliding downhill on the William Baker farm or on what is now (1996) O'Brien Road. On very warm days, during a long lunch hour, we would go down to the swimming pool on the Levi Baker farm and some of the older boys would swim. Our teacher was always present. If the weather kept us inside, we played Fruit Basket Upset, Musical Chairs, or our teacher would read to us.

Upon occasion someone had to stay in during a recess or maybe stay after school. Once in a while someone had to write "I will not do it again" one hundred times in their neatest handwriting. But there was not much of a discipline problem. I be-

lieve this was because: 1) school was our only outlet and social event, few of us went to church or Sunday school often, in fact, during summer vacation we were only allowed to invite our friends over for one afternoon, as everyone was busy on the farm; 2) the maximum number of students at one time was 12, most of the time it was 8; and 3) we all lived within easy walking distance of school and if we did something wrong we would be disciplined, at least verbally, by all the parents in the neighborhood.

We did not use slates or inkwells. We used mostly tablets and pencils, although we did use fountain pens after about the 3rd grade. We had colors and color pencils for art. At the beginning of the year we had a big jar of paste to use, purchased by the school for all. By the end of the year it would be mostly dry. Textbooks were used year after year. Occasionally there would be a new one. The library was a glass-door bookcase, about 4 feet high and 4 feet long. When I started school, we had a manual pump organ. When the bellows got mouse eaten, a piano was donated. In front of the room was a map case with pull-down maps. A picture of George Washington was prominently displayed.

The school was heated by a wood/coal furnace. The building had no storm windows or insulation. On bitter cold, windy days the teacher would load

us into her car and take us to the Frank and Blanche Chapman farm, where we would hold school in their living room.

There was a flag pole in the northeast corner of the yard. In March of 1996 it was the only thing of the school left standing. •

Baker School, 1929-36

By Jerry Baker

My brother, Howard, and I started school in the spring of 1929. We walked to the school in all kinds of weather. In 1932 he graduated. I had three teachers during eighth grade—Ethel Nickwith)* (later Mrs. Ethel Hamman), Margaret Splechter, and Thelma Wickingson. We sold garden seed to get a volleyball set. We had a lot of fun with the set. We played softball in my dad's field. In the winter we would ice skate or ride sleds downhill. We had between 10 and 12 students during my eight years. We joined Ward School boys to play Little Prairie in softball. One Arbor Day we had cleanup and ate lunch down by the creek. Wally Chapman, Ed Baker, and I decided it would be more fun to go fishing after lunch than back to school. When we came back to school on Monday, the teacher (Margaret Splechter) made us stay in every recess and noon until the end of the school year. We took turns getting water for the school from Will Baker. When they were going to school, my dad, Levi Baker, and his brother, Ralph, took turns getting water from the spring which my dad later owned. • * Niquet, per school records.

The Enterprise anticipating your needs places before you a list of a few of the many wants of CHILDHOOD'S HAPPY DAYS.

School Supplies

Composition book, stiff cover..... 5c
Comp. Book, flexible cover...3,4,5,7,8, & 10c
Colored crayons, 6 colors.....1c/box
Pencil boxes.....5,8, & 10c
Noiseless slate, single.....5 & 10c
Mucilage.....4c

White chalk.....10 for 1c
Vertical copy book.....5 & 8c
Exercise book.....1 & 5c
Baseball bat scholar's companion containing ruler, lead and slate pencils and pen holder.....8c
Letter paper.....4 sheets for 1c

School Wear

Boy's Pants.....25,39 & 50c
Boy's soft shirt.....35 & 45c
Boy's suspenders.....5, 10, 15 & 25c
Boy's and misses' collars.....10c
Children's side elastic garters, all sizes..10c pair
Children's ribbed hose, tan or black...10,15,20 & 25c
Dress plaids, very pretty, fast colors..12.5 & 15c

—Eagle Quill, August 31, 1900

Teachers' Institute

The annual institute for the teachers of Waukesha County will be held in the Waukesha High School, July 10-21. All persons who intend to teach in the ungraded schools of this county will realize the importance of attending the institute for the entire time in order that they may be in close touch with the work to be done in the schools next year. Special effort is being made to make this the best institute ever held here.

Work will be offered in Primary Form Reading, Language and Arithmetic; Library Reading; Geography; Agriculture; Pedagogy; School Management; Upper Form Arithmetic; History. If the attendance warrants, classes will be formed in Algebra, Literature and Upper Form Grammar.

Since Agriculture must now be taught in all the rural schools of the state, the work offered in that subject will prepare all who take it for the teaching of that subject as per the suggestive supplement to the Manual which has been promised.

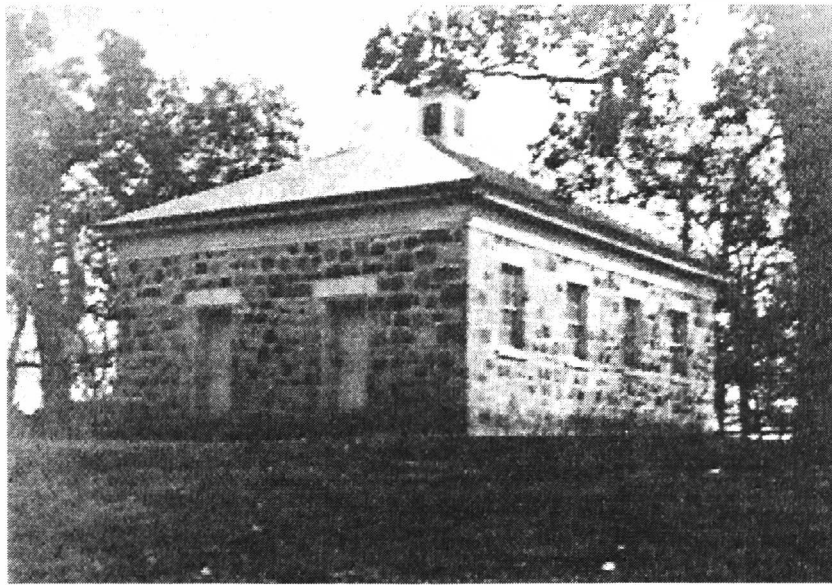
—Eagle Quill, June 30, 1905

IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Pett
Art Stocks

Stone School

From Historical Gleanings of Melendy's Prairie, by Clara Pierce



Stone School, Joint School District #2, Towns of Eagle, Ottawa, Palmyra and Sullivan, built by John Chapin, grandfather of Charles Chapin Pierce

The first school in Melendy's Prairie was a one room school built about 1845 (I assume) and stood on the same site as the Stone School, the corner of what is now Hy. Z and N (just inside Waukesha County). The Stone School was built about 1855 by a stone mason in the neighborhood by the name of John Chapin. A master stone mason and bricklayer, Mr. Chapin came to Melendy's Prairie from Vermont in 1845.

The earliest records of the school to be found are from 1875; William Lawton of La Grange has a music book that was used by one of his ancestors in 1875 at the Stone School.

For years after 1881 the Stone School record book showed that there were 7 months of school each year. The 4 month winter term commenced about November 24. The wages for the winter term were from \$38 to \$40 a month—with a man teaching the winter term. The spring term of three months began about April 24, with a lady teacher. The wages for the spring term were \$17 to \$20 a month. 1906 was the first year there was 9 months of school. The age of the pupils ranged from 5 to 19 years and at one time there were 35 pupils in attendance.

The annual school meeting was held about the first of July, and each year money was appropriated to pay for cord wood to heat the school. The minutes of the meeting would state that 10 cords of wood be bought from the farmers in the neighborhood—usually 5 cords of dry wood and 5 cords of green wood. For many years the money appropriated to run the school for one year was \$220.

There was no well at the school, so water was carried by the pupils from the farm across the corner (from the school)—owned by Thomas Burton. He was paid \$3 a year for the water.

Stone School and Siloam Church were the community meeting places for the local people. The school almost always had a Christmas program arranged by the teacher, with youngsters doing songs, recitations and plays. The parents went and were so proud of their little ones reciting a few lines (often hard to understand). It was also a chance to meet the neighbors and find out the local news and gossip. Santa Claus came at the end of the program and the children received nuts, candy and small gifts—a real thrill for them. Early Christmas trees often actually were decorated with lighted candles.

There was a school picnic on the last day of school each year, and that, too, was a great thrill for the youngsters. It included games, races, lemonade and good food brought by the ladies of the neighborhood.

The Melendy's Prairie School District was consolidated with the Palmyra School District in 1958 or 1959, and the old Stone School was made into a dwelling (owned by Thomas Burton—a great, great grandson of John Chapin, the builder.)•

Nine O'Clock Scholars

By Zella Loomer, as told to the Landmark editor

Mother was born in 1872 in a log house about three farms north of Siloam Church northwest of Eagle. When she was old enough, she started off with slate, book and dinner bucket to Stone School on the southeast corner of the present junction of Z and N.

She, Emma Gilbert, remembered so many details of her eight years there. From 1877 to 1886, her teachers included Mary Griffin, Mr. Chambers, Orley Wilbur, Amelia Demerest, Tillie Elting, Mamie Boone, Edward Aplin, Hannah Boyle, Hattie Holsinger, and Arthur Thorne. And the scholars, more than 50 of them came from 24 families: Burton, Peardon, Stacey, Lean, Ball, Williams, Gates, Allen, Charley, Norris, Biglow, Carlin, Crerar, Medland, Joliff (sic), Aplin, two families of Uglows, two of Pipers, and three of Gilberts.

Pupils sat two in a seat, first on benches, later on seats that turned up for easier sweeping. Teacher started the wood fire in the stove and did the sweeping. Sometimes she or he boarded at Sta-ceys', going home for lunch at noon, and leaving her pupils alone at school.

School started at nine and ended at four o'clock, with an hour noon and recesses at 10:45 and 2:30. All pupils went home at the same time because the older children had to walk home with the young ones, as they dawdled and played.

Youngsters brought cold lunches packed in tiny pails, usually including a Cornish pasty (with the fold along the top, not the side). Sometimes this was the main item of food including mutton and vegetables; but often it was dessert made of apples and rich Devonshire cream. They drank water from a wooden bucket and tin dipper hauled over from Charles Sherman's (east of school) or Tom Burton's (southwest of school).

Ringling the bell was a special privilege. At first it was a handbell, but later a big bell was mounted on the roof of the schoolhouse. Teacher's other equipment included her long blackboard across the whole front of the room, a globe, and kerosene lamps for dark days or evening meetings, or classes.

When her pupils became unruly, Teacher either shook them, stood them in the corner, kept them after school, or made them apologize. She taught them reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and physiology.

If Teacher could lead, the day began with singing. Miss Holsinger was especially talented, and so they sang "MY Country 'Tis of Thee," "Forty Little Ur-chins," "Down in a Diving Bell," "Work for the Night is Coming," "Hold the Fort," "Yield Not to Temptation," "Yankee Doodle" and "Tis the Age of Progress."

Miss Holsinger also taught evening classes in writing and spelling for parents and pupils. McGuffey's Readers, and other books were handed down to younger members of the family until they wore out.

Youngsters memorized many poems and prose... some to be a source of joy and inspiration for a life-time. Pupils were not allowed to make up stories or draw pictures, for such work was considered a waste of time. There was very little "homework," but school spirit was high when they visited rival neighboring schools for spelling bees and box social programs. Promotion in school was recognized by advancement to a harder reader; there were no grades or marks.

Community customs and status appeared in dress and correctness of behavior and speech. Girls always wore aprons and high-top shoes. Most youngsters went barefoot in warm weather. Most wore sulphur bags around their necks to protect against colds. Some had Chicken Pox, Measles, and Scarlet Fever.

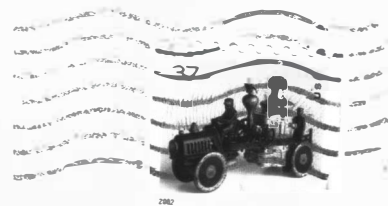
What kind of games did they play? Pom-pom Pull Away, Hide and Seek, Drop the Handkerchief, Ring Around Rosie, and Crack the Whip. Boys played baseball, marbles, and mumblety Peg; girls played jacks and sometimes brought their dolls. All went coasting in winter, usually across the road to the north where the slope took them down to Beaver Dam Lake. They didn't skate much because of the weeds.

Hunting for wildflowers and pretty stones were favorite activities, too; gathering and making daisy chains, drapes of oak leaves, a rare pond lily, violets and harebells (Grandfather Greybeards). They were gathered with care, displayed eagerly, and treasured.

Teacher ended the academic year at Stone School near Eagle with "Reward of Merit" cards and "Last Day" cards given out at special exercises attended by the scholars and their families.

—Landmark, Autumn 1963


Eagle Historical Society, Inc.
217 W. Main Street
P.O. Box 454
Eagle, WI 53119



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

WANTED:

VOLUNTEERS LIKE YOU?



Individuals to embroider one square each of a state bird quilt to be displayed at the museum.

Individual with woodworking skills to repair a toy cradle (one rocker must be reconstructed)

Individual with computer to work at home assisting with donation acknowledgment letters

