

## HISTORY OF RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 69

BY  
Ann Vach

In 1903, students in District #69 were taught in the home. The first school was built in 1904 in Chengwatana in T 39N, R 21 W, Sec. 23 NE of N.W. The first annual meeting of District 69 was held Saturday, July 29, 1905 at the schoolhouse. Frank Kunz was director, Anton Wanous, treasurer and Frank Drimel, clerk. It was voted to have six months of school, fall term two months beginning August 4, 1905. Winter term was four months, beginning January 1906. Teachers wages were \$125.00 for six months.

Clara Kunz was in sixth grade in 1903. She graduated from eighth grade in 1905 in April and began teaching in District #69 the following fall. She taught there for three years. Her wages were \$30.00 a month.

On July 21, 1906, they voted to have six months of school--three in the fall and three during the winter, and to move the school from Sec. 23 to Sec. 24, NW of NW at a cost of \$221.52. The vote carried nine to one. The board paid \$1.00 to Frank Kunz for the site.

Thomas Huttel delivered wood for \$2.50 per cord in two foot long pieces. Teacher's wages were set at \$200.00 for six months, wood expenditure for that period was \$20.00, and repairs and furniture came to \$32.00. The bill for cleaning the school was \$3.00.

The school burned during the winter of 1907, and was covered by insurance in the amount of \$450.00. A special school board meeting was held at the Frank Kunz residence. The decision was,

"Shall the bonds of school district #69 be issued to the State of Minnesota in the aggregate amount of \$800.00 bearing interest at the rate of four percent annum, the proceeds to be used for the purpose of building a schoolhouse in said District and to be numbered and mature as set forth in the resolution now on file in the office of said District. Place X in one of squares----Yes----No----."

The bond issue was passed and accepted by six votes.

April 25, 1908, a meeting was held at the Adolph Kubat place to change the site of the schoolhouse to Sec. 14, S.E. & S.E.. It passed by a vote of six to two. Adolph Wanous was to be paid \$15.00 for one acre of land for the new school. The schoolhouse property in Sec. 23 was sold to the Clover Land Co. Corporation of Pine City for \$50.00.

The new school was built during June, July, August and Oct. 1908.

Receipts for the new building were as follows:

August Klicker, General Contractor	\$823.00
Anton Wanous for one acre of land	15.00
Adolph Kubat six days of masonry work	16.50
Thomas Huettel, laborer	10.50

Frank Drimel, hauling lumber & labor	4.50
Andrew Carlson, 3 days labor	4.50
Anton Wanous, lumber & rods	10.50
James Wandel, recording deed	1.00
Frank Kunz, labor and hauling	15.00
Dan Payne, lime and cement	6.82
Anton Wanous, fire insurance	3.70
Frank Kunz, window curtains	5.50
Smith Hdw., stove and misc. supplies	21.30

TOTAL BUILDING COST \$937.82

School desks cost \$81.56 plus freight charge of \$10.35 and books cost \$19.46.

At the annual meeting, July 18, 1914, the board voted that taxes be lowered to 10 mills for the coming year and to have eight months of school. The cost of tornado and cyclone insurance was \$1.50 and teachers wages were raised to \$50.00 a month.

In 1919, lawn improvements were made and trees planted. In 1920, they erected a flag pole and hired a janitor for \$20.00 a month to build the fire and do general janitorial work.

In 1929, a local farmer protested that the school fence line was too far into his land. School board members agreed to have the land surveyed if the farmer agreed to pay his share. The farmer refused. After several measurements by the board, the farmer agreed on a settlement. According to the minutes, it appears that the fence remained in its original position.

By 1932, teachers wages had gone up to \$60.00 a month and the first playground equipment was purchased at a cost of \$62.50.

A well wasn't mentioned in the minutes until 1938. Rudolph Kubat was hired to dig a well at a cost of \$125.00 for labor and materials. The minutes state that since he was unable to live up to his contract as to the depth of the well because too much water was running in, the board decided to pay him by day labor rates. Evidently he was unable to hit a flowing vein and the minutes don't indicate whether or not the school ever had a well in the yard.

On October 11, 1940, a special meeting regarding transportation of children to High School in Pine City. The vote was 10 for and 22 votes against. It was settled that there would be no payment made by the school district, since the parents of the school pupils did not agree as to their part. The school offered to pay half of the cost if the parents would pay half.

Teachers kept valuable records regarding problems that surfaced in rural schools. These notes contribute to the history of a school.

They said, "Discipline problems in the school were very hard. There is more or less feuding between the two nationalities which is most easily combated by ignoring their differences and preaching friendship in class."

"Elementary children did not attend regularly. They were in different parts of the book. Some children had to learn the English language but most of them learned it rapidly."

"Attendance was very poor. During the winter months small children were absent and in the fall and spring the older children were needed at home. It was impossible to pass those who missed so much and yet, their parents expected they should pass."

"Many of the books were borrowed from other schools."

IN 1964 THE SCHOOL CLOSED;

Before the schools were dismantled a meeting was held in March 1970 at the home of Clarence and Kay Espeseth for concerned citizens who wanted to save a school for a museum. Clarence knew of two schools available--district 80, Cedar Lake, and district 69, Kubat-Wanous School. Under Espeseth's supervision, an organization to save the school was formed. Richard Lindig was president, Waldo Kick, vice president, Dorothy Engel, secretary and Delores Erhart, treasurer. A campaign was begun to raise money for the restoration and generous donations poured in from businesses and local people.

The bell was donated by the Milburn district and board members Merlin Madison, Omar Nordrum and James Sward.

The bell weighed 355 lbs. and was originally donated to the former Dist. 33 located in the Milburn community east of Pine City, by George Hudak. He was somewhat of a perfectionist and couldn't stand the fact, as he explained it, that the old bell was out of tune. At his own expense he removed the bell and installed a new one. This was done about the late 30's or early 40's. Some of the memories of Dist. #33 school days included Christmas programs when Mr. Hudak would come back and ring the bell, listen carefully, and then announced with a big grin that the bell was still in tune. - *History of Bell by Dean Madison.*

By September, 1970, five pickup truck loads of miscellaneous items were donated. Desks, records, books, maps, etc. The school was purchased in 1970 and in August, 1971, the country schoolhouse had its first look at the city and its new home located at the present site. It was lifted off its rock foundation by the Webber House Moving Co. of Sandstone.

Moving the building cost \$800.00, East Central Electric, \$200.00, Northwestern Bell, \$275.00, Burlington Northern Railroad, \$125.00. The Rural School Association funds were exhausted and an additional \$1,500.00 was needed. Concrete blocks and labor were donated by Bob Libel, Braham donated Economy Ready Mix Cement, bell tower was erected by Paul Ryberg and paint by Ed Stoffel who owned the Builder's Supply store in Pine City. A portion of the labor was donated by Bob Thieman construction and crew.

In January and Feb., 1972, a donkey ball game was a popular fundraiser and we served lunch at auctions. Private donations from business and individuals continued to come in.

May 30, 1974, the restoration of the country school was completed and paid for. In just four years, what began modestly with a meeting of seven interested people who had a desire to preserve the memory of rural schools, had now become a reality.

Today the Rural School Museum holds annual week long rural school sessions where children are taught and dressed as they would have been in 1900. Mrs. Esther Schmidt who teaches the classes has been recognized in national magazines for bringing the rural school experience to modern day youngsters.

For the past two years, third grade students from the Pine City Public School experience a living history lesson as they attend school in the Rural School Museum and take a step into the past with teacher, Doris Pangerl.

A listing in the Minnesota Explorer and Tourism publications has put the Rural School Museum on the visiting list of many tourists. Curators of local historical sites, the Northwest Fur Post, Hinckley Fire Museum, Askov Museum, and the Rural School Museum, work together to coordinate tours for visitors to Pine County.

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