

Bernadette Wurm

Excellent Report
A. J.

It has been 18 years since the flag waved proudly on the flagpole when school was in session. So let's take a trip down Memory Lane and see what we can discover.

The first school in Pine County was established in 1836 by a Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Frederick Ayers on the east bank of Pokegama Lake, the present Ralph Ausmus farm. Rev. William Boutwell soon came to help. The number of students 12, teachers 4- 2 male and 2 female. ~~The school had the first printing press in Minnesota.~~ Both Indians and whites attended. The mission was abandoned in 1847.

not true.
see Ayers Papers.

The first public school was Dist. # 1, organized in 1868 and a schoolhouse built on the site of Pine Camp. Chengwatana townsite was then the county seat of Pine County. In 1869 John D. Wilcox of Sunrise came to teach this school. He taught 3 years. He stayed on in Pine City and was Supt. of Schools for 6 yrs. besides serving other county offices.

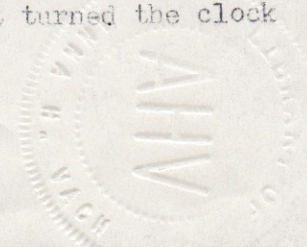
The new town of Pine City was growing and in 1869 Dist. # 3 was organized. A schoolhouse was built on the present site of the courthouse. It served for 25 years until the new Webster school was built in 1894. The first schoolhouse became the Pine City Village Hall. Webster school was destroyed by fire on Jan. 6, 1939.

Dist. # 9, Connaker school, was organized in 1882 with a schoolhouse built on the west side of Rock Lake. It also included the east side of Rock Lake. Edith and Ainsley Robinson rowed a boat across Rock Lake to get to school. Howard Robinson told of walking on the hogs back along Rock Lake to get to school. The first year there was a spring term of 2 months and a fall term of 2 months with a 2 week potato-picking vacation. Potatoes were a cash crop. The teacher's contract stated the teacher was to start the fire, sweep and keep the schoolhouse clean at a salary of \$25 per month. By 1920 the teachers salary was \$100 with an 8 month term of school. In the 1930's it was reduced to \$50 per month and some districts paid even less.

In 1893 a school was built on the east side of Rock Lake. The 2 schools were operated as one district until 1908. Then the east side was set off and Dist. # 77 was organized. One teacher had a rule the boys were to wear a necktie, a boy defied the rule and was expelled. His father agreed with him and he transferred to Dist. # 15. Ella Lahodney taught this school for 20 years. During World War II with gasoline and tire rationing, she rode her bicycle to school. Dwindling enrollments and the opening of St. Mary's school caused both schools to consolidate in 1957. An auction was held at both schools, Chas. Spinler bought Dist. #9 schoolhouse and moved it off; Bob Dipprey bought Dist. # 77 schoolhouse and moved it.

Dist. #15, Lincoln school in Pine Grove was organized in 1885. It was located on the old government road. It served that community until it wasn't needed anymore and the school consolidated.

Dist. # 30 Washington school or 4 corners school was organized in 1896. Joe Karas attended here and around 1949 served as our state representative in the legislature. Otto "Pat" Kuss also a graduate became a professional wrestler. His mother told that Pat drank lots of milk but it had to be out of a glass. They put on their Christmas program in the town hall. One teacher had a long walk out from town, she had a habit of being late, she just turned the clock back to 9 o'clock and started school.



When the officials of the State Dept. of Education visited this school when Mabel Johnson Straight was teaching, they liked her work and gave her an Award of Excellence. Dist. # 30 had 2 sets of twins in school in th 1920's, Violet and Viva Ward and Helen and Hattie Schmidt. They were in the same grade. This school consolidated in 1969, an auction held and the land and buildings sold.

Dist. # 33, Milburn school, was organized in 1898. The first school was located on the Glasow farm. Later a new school was built on Eileen Anderson's farm. It had 33 pupils, they played a game called "Peny". One teacher had some boards nailed together for the boys to play Jack-Knife. That sure saved a lot of wear and tear on the floor. The school was well keptup, later on it had indoor toilets, a gas furnace and a telephone. For many years, Mrs. Ever Madison made popcorn balls for the Christmas program. Geo. Hudak bought a big bell for the bell tower. When the school closed, this was donated to the Rural School Museum. The Electric Company used its cherrypicker to remove the bell and install it in the rural museum. Dist. # 33 was one of the last schools to consolidate. The consolidation act of 1967 decreed that all rural schools were to be consolidated by July 1, 1970. Dist. # 33 consolidated in 1970, an auction was held and Eileen Anderson owns the building.

Dist. # 53 Sauter school was organized in 1902. A 1916 map shows the schoolhouse on the Chas. Minar farm. Later a new schoolhouse was built on the Valentine Minar farm across from Sauters. It had a full basement and was well built. There was no well, so water was carried from Sauters. Andrew Gallik attended this school and went on to be ordained a priest in June of 1926. George Gallik went on to get a degree in Civil Engineering and then decided to study for the priesthood and was ordained in May 1934. Ida Kubat taught there the last 5 years the school was in session. It consolidated in 1969. An auction was held with Leo Bendictson buying the land and schoolhouse. He lived in it until this spring when it was sold again. This time the people remodeled it into a nice home.

Dist. # 99 Spring Valley school or Soderbeck school was organized in 1912. They had been transporting 27 children to the Sauter school and decided to organize their own school. Land was bought from Martin Gardner and a schoolhouse built. When the school was completed some children from Chengwatana rowed a boat across the Snake River and attended school there. Robert Soderbeck had perfect attendance for 2 years. Glen Truesdale became an auctioneer and also served one term as state representative in the legislature. The winter of 1936 was so cold and so much snow, they couldn't keep warm so they closed the school for a time. Soon there were only 7 pupils, not enough state aid to operate a school, so they tried bussing to town. The roads weren't ready for the busses, they lost a gas tank on Sheuy's hill and other mishaps. They transported the students 1 year to the Milburn school and 2 years to the Sauter school. In 1954 they consolidated, held an auction and sold the building and land. The land is now owned by the Boy Scouts.

Only the Milburn schoolhouse stands, the doors are gone, the windows broken, the birds fly in and out. It reminded me of the poem "Schooldays" by John Greenlief Whittier. The first verse goes like this;

Still sits the schoolhouse by the road,
A ragged beggar sleeping
Around it still the sumachs grow
And blackberry vines are creeping.

This is the speech given by Bernadette Wurm on July 10, 1988 at the dedication of the new Pine Town Hall.

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