



West Bloomfield, the township of lakes and gentle hills, is one of transformation from wilderness beginnings and the domain of the Indian for some 12,000 years to agricultural prominence, to vacation dreams and summer resorts, to now established suburban living. The natural beauty and resources of its residents have played a key role in its growth.

Since its earliest settlement, these residents have been deeply committed to education as the key to passing on their heritage and preparing their children to shape the future of our township. *Peal of The Bell* chronicles the community's history to carry that mission into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This report includes a virtual exhibit of photos and documents of the history of the schools serving children living in West Bloomfield, Michigan. Like other more traditional museum exhibits it combines original artifacts and primary documents with text, captions, and analysis to help the reader understand the importance and significance of these items.

This presentation allows you to enlarge images for closer inspection or readability because we believe that a picture is worth a thousand words. You might want to focus on people's faces to see if you recognize them or to examine their expression. Perhaps you want to study clothing styles, penmanship, or advertisements of the day. These images also help you to visualize the environment of the scene and place yourself within it. Many of the pictures in this exhibit are actual original documents and artifacts produced by the people who made the history of West Bloomfield Schools. Examining them will bring you one step closer to the events that shaped our current school system.

## **Part 1: Peal of the Bell: 1800s to Early 1900s**



## You are reading Section 2: Pine Lake Elementary School

**Be sure to read the entire Part 1 report covering these early years:**

### **Section 1. History of the School System**

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### **Section 2. Pine Lake Elementary School**

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### **Section 8. The Keego Harbor School**

Little Community Needs School 1914 – 1920s  
Post-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Education  
What Every Good Teacher Must Know 1912

### **Section 4. Walnut Lake Elementary Schoolhouse**

Residents Wanted Their Own School 1872  
New and Larger 1936 – Close

### **Section 9. DUR Brings Changes**

### **Section 10. Farming In West Bloomfield**

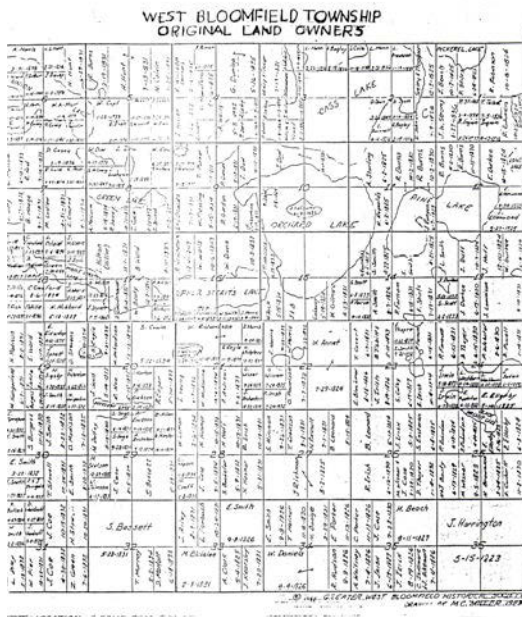
### **Section 5. Green Elementary School**

Green Family Influences A Community 1866 – 1900  
Green School: Lessons To Learn  
School Days at Green 1900s  
A New Green School 1948

### **Section 6. Early Years: Other Schools -1800 – 1900s**

# Pine Lake School

## Early Settlers Drawn To Pine Lake



*Plat map of first settlers in the township showing the Huff, Duff and Ellenwood properties.*

The Pine Lake Association's web site tells about early development around Pine Lake:

***“During the 1820's the government began auctioning off land around Pine Lake and rumor spread throughout the country that the outlying areas of Detroit were perfect for habitation, citing cheap land and an abundance of water. There is confusion as to which settlement of the white man was the first: John Huff of New York started clearing an area on the southeastern shore of Pine Lake in 1821. He also erected a substantial log cabin on the site. However, he did not register his claim until 1824.”***

Two others, James Herrington from New York and Benjamin Irish, became the first settlers of record in 1823. Irish bought with him his wife, six sons and three daughters. Both men died in 1825.

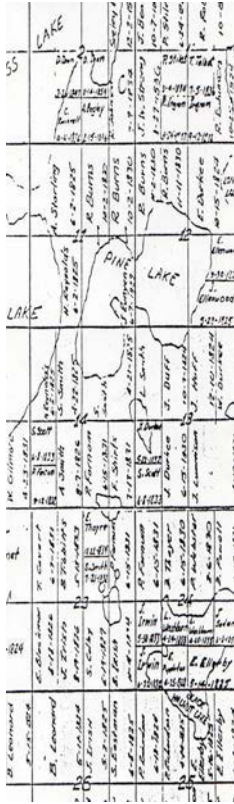
Huff died in 1825, but not before sharing his home with the John Ellenwood family, comprised of relatives and many children, due to financial resources and until their own home could be built. Jedidiah Durkee also housed the Ellenwoods. John

Ellenwood would go on to establish the first post office and serve as postmaster. He became the local justice of the peace, township supervisor, served as a framer of the State constitution and was a planner of township and county roads. He was a delegate from the Fifth District to the First Constitutional Convention in 1835; and Representative from Oakland County, 1835 and 1836. Born in New Hampshire, Sept. 17, 1777, he came to West Bloomfield in 1823. He was appointed a Justice in 1827 and held that position through life. By occupation he was a surveyor, in politics a Democrat. He surveyed nearly all the roads in this section and after his death the office was discontinued of County Surveyor. He was the first Postmaster from 1831 to 1856, and Supervisor nine years. He died May 9, 1856.

The land located south of the Orchard Gravel Road (now Orchard Lake Road) running along Middlebelt Road between Pine and Walnut Lakes, offered high, fertile ground and was just the right place to raise a family. These families, all with large number of children, probably saw the need for a schoolhouse to provide an education for their children. Thus the history of Pine Lake School begins:

### **First Schoolhouse Near Pine Lake? 1828**

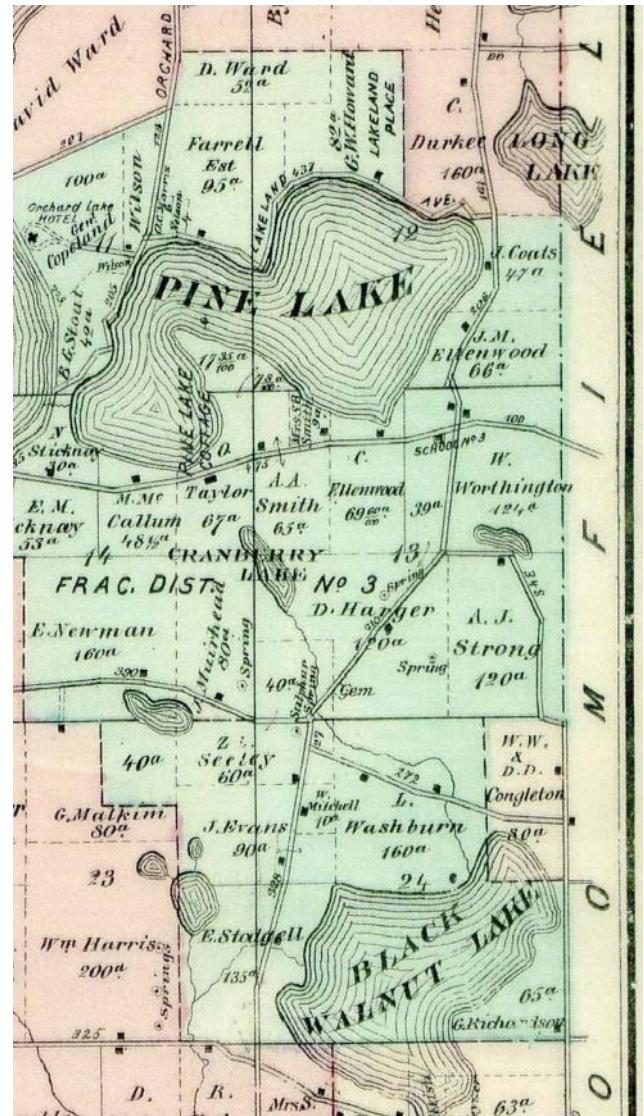
A log cabin building is thought to have been built between Pine and Walnut Lakes. Most likely it was located on the northwest corner of present day Middlebelt and Long Lake Roads. No known pictures exist and it is not known if it was called the Pine Lake School. Since Duff, Huff, and Irish all died at or around 1825-26, it is most likely that William or Jedediah Durkee owned this property when this first building was erected. Around this time, the Ellenwood family had moved in with Durkee and there were several children between the two families. It would seem probable that some kind of a building would have been built for children to receive an education.



*Blow-up of the plat map showing the Huff, Duff and Ellenwood properties.*

In 1831, Jedediah Durkee sold a small parcel of land for \$10 to local residents for \$1.50 per person, establishing the Pine Lake Cemetery. The first burial was for Eban Ellenwood, a relative of John.

No school is seen on an 1857 map of the area. By 1872 a schoolhouse is clearly seen on the map. It was then located on the southwest corner of modern-day Middlebelt and Long Lake Road. The map shows Fractional District 3, with the school located on the Ellenwood property.



*1872 map shows school on southwest side of Middlebelt Road*

## Pine Lake School 1885 - 1948

By 1885 a large wood-planked schoolhouse, called the Pine Lake School No. 3, in Fractional District No. 3 is seen on maps at the southwest corner of Middlebelt and Long Lake Road on what was then the Seeley property. This building is still standing today after being converted to a residential home. In 1958 it was turned sideways, moved back from the road and placed on a new foundation by its owner. It had also been used for a time as an Episcopal Church and a Christian Science Reading Room. The bell tower still sits atop the building.

In Jay Brown's 1979 paper, "Pine Lake School" he writes:

*"Many of the pioneers who settled here worked their lands well and were regarded handsomely. They began to think about better education for their children. They were paying township taxes and it was recorded that in 1880, the School District No. 3 received \$38.63 from a dog tax. It was time to build a new school.*

*"In October 1885, Samuel Palmer received the first payment for constructing Pine Lake School No. 3, at the corner of Middlebelt and Long Lake Roads. In January 2, 1886, he received the last payment for constructing Pine Lake School No. 3.*

*"In January, 1886 he received the last amount of \$850. Douglas Harger equipped the room and these items and costs were taken from the ledger:*

<i>1 bell and stove pipe</i>	<i>\$25.00</i>
<i>seats</i>	<i>\$75.00</i>
<i>chalk, broom, dipper</i>	<i>.45</i>

*"The first teacher was Mae Edwards, at a salary of \$22 per month. The school year ran from September to June. Each year there was a different teacher. Occasionally it was a male teacher, as in 1887 and 1901, when the salary was raised to \$36 per month. It dropped to \$30 when Miss Richardson became the teacher. Four dollars a month was paid to a local resident for starting fires in the stoves.*

*"Electricity was installed in Pine Lake School in July 1916. Shades and curtains were purchased and teachers' salary was up to \$100 per month. In 1932 a basement was dug under the school and bathrooms and a furnace were installed. A sink and glasses were purchased. Grades were one through eighth and Mrs. Eva Thompson was hired for a salary of \$125 per year."*

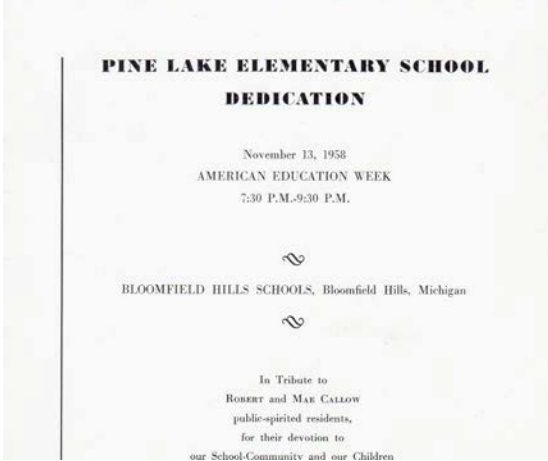


*Pine Lake Students 1939-40*

**1948** – District No. 3 was officially annexed to the Bloomfield Hills School District. The school presented a few problems for Bloomfield Hills: the disposal facilities were inadequate and the septic tank was not even on school property. The District decided that operating Pine Lake School at that site was too inefficient and it abandoned the small building after only one year. The children were then bussed to Bloomfield's Vaughn School, until the opening of the new Pine Lake School in 1958.

## **Pine Lake School 1958 – 2011 Close**

A new school was built on 12 acres on land belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Callow, who sold it at a much-reduced rate to the school district with the caveat that it be used for educational purposes only. Architects Tarapata-MacMahon were awarded the contract for construction. It opened with 168 students and a staff of seven teachers. The school had six classrooms, plus office, library and all purpose room, kitchen, and clinic at a cost of \$300,000. Also dedicated was a bell tower in the courtyard, which housed the bronze bell from the original Pine Lake School. It is known as the Callow Bell Tower honoring Robert and Mae Callow. Mae Callows grandmother had attended the old Pine Lake School in the late 1800s.



*Dedication Booklet 1958*

**1967 – 1968.** Student population reached 700. To accommodate the number of students, six temporary, portable classrooms were used. Sixth graders were moved to West Hills Junior high. In 1960 a five-acre parcel was added, with another land acquisition in 1965. In 1974 a pathway egress was created to allow children to walk back and forth to school. Various additions and renovations, including special education facilities and an enclosure of the courtyard, also took place.

**2011** - Pine Lake School closed, but not without objection from parents and property owners who fought the Board of Education against the closing. Students were transferred to other schools. The building was leased to another school district.

## Summary disposition granted in Pine Lake School lawsuit

By ANN ZANIEWSKI  
Of The Oakland Press

An Oakland County judge has granted a motion for summary judgment that essentially dismisses a lawsuit filed over the use and future of Pine Lake School.

But an attorney for the plaintiffs said he intends to ask Oakland Circuit Judge Michael Warren to review his decision in light of a higher court's ruling that could have implications in the case.

Back in 2009, a group of parents and owners of property near Pine Lake School who were upset by a Bloomfield Hills Schools Board of Education decision to close the building sued the school district. They argued that a woman named Mae Callow essentially donated the property to the district in 1955 and that the deed established a charitable trust that requires the land to be used for school purposes.

Warren sided with the plain-

tiffs in an August 2009 opinion that said the circumstances and intentions of Callow and the district established a charitable trust. Warren said by closing Pine Lake School and leasing the deeded property to another school district, the defendants breached the charitable trust.

The district appealed. Robert Lusk, an attorney for Bloomfield Hills Schools, said the Court of Appeals determined that there was no charitable trust, but that the district had to follow the deed and use the property for school purposes. If it didn't, Callow's heirs could claim the property back.

Lusk said Callow's heirs contacted the district and said they would be willing to sell it their interest in the property. The sale happened last year.

The district asked for the case to be dismissed. Earlier this month and without oral arguments, Warren issued a written opinion granting the district's motion for summary disposi-

tion and closed the case.

Lusk said Warren essentially said in his opinion that the plaintiffs' theory that a common law dedication applies in the Pine Lake case is not consistent with the Court of Appeals' decision and doesn't prevent the district from using the property as it sees fit.

Terrence Hall, an attorney representing the parents and the residents, said he believes a Dec. 29 Michigan Supreme Court opinion regarding common law dedication could have an impact on the Pine Lake case.

"We intend to request that Judge Warren reevaluate the case in light of this Supreme Court decision, which takes precedent over the opinion from the Court of Appeals," Hall said.

Contact staff writer Ann Zaniewski at (248) 745-4628 or ann.zaniewski@oakpress.com. Follow her on Twitter @OPCourtReporter.

*Parents fought the closing of Pine Lake but to no avail. Source: Oakland Press*

## Pine Lake Sabbath School

Little information has been found regarding the Sabbath School, only that it was a non-denominational church school and that worshipers may have met in the Pine Lake School No. 3 building.

There are references to families meeting for religious purposes in “the frame schoolhouse near Williams Durkee's property commencing about the year 1838.” It was founded by Rev. 'Uncle Laban' Smith, a Methodist minister. Members included the Ellenwoods and several other families. Smith, a resident of Pine Lake since 1825, was well regarded in the community:

*“In 1825, Rev. Laban Smith settled on the south side of Pine Lake along with his brother, Stephen Smith, both “excellent trappers, and the lake was at that time teeming with muskrats, and from these they caught sometimes as many as a dozen in one night, each pelt readily brought four shillings, a sum greater than could at that time be realized for two bushels of the best wheat; and by this means they procured the few necessities which could not be obtained by barter, but which required cash, - a commodity which neither their husbandry nor Uncle Laban's preaching would then furnish.”*

*Source: History of Oakland County, 1912.*

Laban was a circuit preacher-one who officiated at meetings of worship, weddings, and funerals in schoolhouses, churches, homes, barns, shops, and even out of doors. Laban died in 1867 at his home on Pine Lake and was buried at Pine Lake Cemetery.

No more information has been found about the congregation that met in the frame schoolhouse nor about the controversy within the Methodist congregation. The church was eventually “brought down by a difference arising out of the question of slavery.”

The Sabbath School banner was preserved and framed by the Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society. It is dated 1870 and is believed to have hung in the Pine Lake School building until the structure was abandoned in 1955.



*The Sabbath School banner hung in the Pine Lake School until it was acquired by the Harger family, who donated it to the GWBHS in 2006. The banner is made of white silk fabric with lettering in black ink. The border, made of blue silk ribbon, is backed with cotton muslin. As originally constructed, the banner was supported by two oak rods attached by small rings. The two printed lapel ribbons now tacked to the banner were probably worn by Sabbath School teachers.*