



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 21st 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 3: Scotch Elementary School

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

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Section 3. Scotch Elementary School

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Section 8. The Keego Harbor School

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Scotch School

First Scotch School 1829 to 1853

The lakes area drew people of Scottish descent to the north side of Orchard Lake. The first Scot thought to visit there was named Fraizer. In an article, "Scotch Settlers of Oakland County" by Robert Malcom, Malcom relates how Fraizer came to the area in the year 1819, when he accompanied General Cass and a company of American officers to meet with the Indians. While others were in negotiations, Fraizer explored Pine, Orchard, Cass, Green and Upper Middle Straits lakes.

In his article for the Michigan Historical Collection, Vol. 39, Feb. 1912, George Malcom writes, "Whenever a Scotchman came into the land office (Detroit, MI) where Frazier was an officer, he did his best to head the land seeker toward the lake country. He was so successful, that from 1828 to 1835, he had placed some 30 or 35 families around the lakes. . ." These same families also wrote home to Scotland encouraging land seekers to the area. Thus, a large community of Scots, early supporters of education who held a strong tradition of literacy based on study of the Bible became established. Soon a need for a school was evident.

In 1986, Frank Salo, local historian and head custodian for Scotch School for over 36 years researched the history of Scotch School. He writes about a log structure that stood on deeded land near the corner of what is now Commerce Road and Old Orchard Trail. He believes the school was there from about 1829 to 1853. Homer Winslow's picture *The Country School* gives an idea of how it might have looked.



Salo writes that this first Scotch School in the district ***“was of log construction and located kitty-corner from the present site and several feet south of Commerce Road on Old Orchard Trail (across from the 3250 Commerce Road. The school was probably located on the southeast side of Commerce, somewhat back from the road. Old Orchard Trail was not connected to Commerce at that time) The land was obtained from Angus McCullum. The building was small with benches all along the walls. Bailey Lawrence lived in a log house across from the school.***

“There were two terms at the time: a winter term and a summer term with two teachers, one for each term. The summer term ran from April to August and about twenty pupils attended. The winter term ran from October to March and many more pupils attended this term. There were a few apple trees and lilac bushes in the school yard. At the time, the school was name Scotch School. There was just one family in the district that were not from Scotland.”

In a paper about Pennell School, "Addition to School, District No. 3," Bell Dodge Green (Mrs. Albo) writes: ***“Some of the teachers were (lists several) . . . and later Mrs. Herrington, whose husband taught the first school in the Scotch School house.”***

Very little is known about this first Scotch School structure and no picture has ever been found.

Second Scotch School 1853 c. - 1926

The second Scotch School (address 3250 Commerce Road) was built "on or about 1853" according to Salo and was located across the street from the first school on the northwest side of Commerce Road. Salo obtained a photo of the building from a former principal, Mr. Raymond Young, who found it on a shelf in the school. Salo writes, ***“It was a one room frame building and was***

used until 1926, when (after that) a brick structure was constructed on the same site just behind the frame building.”



Second Scotch School, undated.

“The frame building contained one room and an entrance hall. In the hall the wraps were hung and there was a wash stand with a wash basin, water pail and a dipper. In the yard was the pump with a dipper. The room was divided by an aisle down the middle, the boys sat on one side and the girls on the other. In the front was a platform with a teacher's desk and recitation benches and in the corner was an old organ. There was a large wood burning stove in the center towards the front which held a cord of wood. James Walls attended this school and his son and grandson attended the later Scotch Schools buildings.”

From Reminiscences of Mrs. Elizabeth Hiller Welch, written in 1908: **“In about 1850, the school house known as Scotch School was built. They started a Sunday school there with father as superintendent. I remember the little old wood structure with its seats going around the stove. A little old Scotch man taught. Then a new school house was built.”** She remembered two teachers: Mrs. Herrington and C.B. Boughner.



The second Scotch School – no date



Lena Eva Langdon, Teacher, 1916

The Third Scotch School: 1926

Salo continues to write that a new brick structure containing just two rooms was begun in 1925 and finished in 1926 and was built just feet in back of the wooden plank schoolhouse. The old framed building was torn down. The land for the one room wood frame building was originally obtained from Robert Greer; and when the brick building was built, an additional acre was purchased from the Leggett farm just north of the school for \$1,000.

From an article, 'Scotch School Memories Linger

On” by Keily DeLeo, unknown newspaper article, no date:

“Betsy Weatherstone attended Scotch in the 1920's and early 30's, when it was only a two room schoolhouse with one teacher who taught eight grades and all subjects: “Because there were not enough kids and only one teacher, one room of the school was used to teach in,” explained Weatherstone. The room had wood floors; across the back and front walls ran the blackboards. The yellow wooden desks with ink wells were stationary and sat in a semi-circle. Our teacher's desk was in the front of the room near the window. In the back corner stood a sandbox for the little kids to play with. The school day started at 9 am and ended at 4 pm.”

Salo remembers: *“Since then, (1926) additions to Scotch School took place in 1944, 1949, 1953, 1957, 1965, and 1970. One major renovation included filling in the original courtyard in the center of the building in order to create classrooms.”*

The last five acres of the entire site, including a pond west of the school, was purchased from Martin Distel in the 1960s for the sum of \$5,000. .

See Part II of The Peal of the Bell report for the history of Scotch School.