



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 4: Walnut Lake School

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

Section 1. History of the School System

Early Commitment to Education
Territorial Commission of 1805
School Districts – Full and Fractional
Laws Establish Schools
Education from 1820 – 1900
Rules For Teachers 1827

Section 2. Pine Lake Elementary School

Early Settlers Drawn To Pine Lake
First Schoolhouse Near Pine Lake - 1828
Second Pine Lake School 1855 – 1948
Pine Lake 1958 – 2011 Close
Pine Lake Sabbath School

Section 3. Scotch Elementary School

First Scotch School 1829 – 1853
Second Scotch School 1853 c. - 1926
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Section 4. Walnut Lake Elementary Schoolhouse

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

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

Hosner School
Pennell School
Ward Eagle School
German Stone School
Levi Green School

Section 7. Daniel Whitfield Elementary School

Tfractional District 6 Established 1851
Daniel Whitfield School 1852 – 1894
Daniel Whitfield School 1894 – 1927
Was There a Hammond School?
Whitfield School 1927 – 1991 Close
Fond Memories From Principals
Mary and Her Little Lamb Painting – Roy Gamble

Section 8. The Keego Harbor School

Little Community Needs School 1914 – 1920s
Post-8th Grade Education
What Every good Teacher Must Know 1912

Section 9. DUR Brings Changes

Section 10. Farming In West Bloomfield

Walnut Lake School

Residents Wanted Their Own School 1872

Walnut Lake School was the third school in the West Bloomfield area and the first used to serve the Walnut Lake community. Only two other schools preceded it. One was located between Pine Lake and Black Walnut Lake, as it was known then, in 1828. Another was built by the Scotch settlement between Orchard Lake and Green Lake, called Scotch School.

In 1836 the newly formed West Bloomfield Township School District purchased a parcel of land and erected a log cabin one-room structure. *The History of Oakland County*, pub.1877, states that this school was near the home of Peter Richardson who settled in West Bloomfield in 1824 in the NW quarter of section 24 near the intersection of Walnut Lake Road, then known as Angled Road, and Middlebelt Road, then known as the West Bloomfield Road.

“The early structures were crude, and only elementary, after the universal pattern of schools in agricultural communities in those days; and yet, there are many instances of thorough educations acquired, of which the foundations were laid in those same log house schools.”
Source: *“The History Oakland County, Michigan”* pub.1877.



1880's Walnut Lake School

Around 1872 Walnut Lake community members wanted their own school. At this time there were

three fractional school districts the children attend. Children from the SE corner of Walnut Lake belonged to Fractional District No.8 and went to the stone-constructed Wing Lake School on Wing Lake Road near Maple, or they may have attended the Franklin one-room log cabin. The children from the SW corner belonged to Fractional District No. 6 and would have attended the (Hartwell) Green School located near Walnut Lake Road and Orchard Lake Road. Other children went to the German school, also stone-constructed, which still stands today (2013) on Middlebelt, south of 14 Mile Road. The children from the north belonged to Fractional District No. 3, which they shared with Bloomfield. They could go to the Pine Lake School, now a residence at the corner of Long Lake Road and Middlebelt.



1920's Walnut Lake School students

“Some sources indicate a frame structure schoolhouse was constructed on the current Walnut Lake School site near the intersection of Walnut Lake Road and Inkster in 1855, but it is believed that Walnut Lake School's first permanent structure, a small one-room frame building, was built between 1883-1885.”
Source: Lisa Fenkell

Walnut Lake School was the first brick schoolhouse in the township, probably built with Bigelow bricks from the mill two miles south at 14 Mile Road and Inkster. Because most reports describe this building as a “frame” structure, the bricks could have been added later. Today, the original schoolhouse can still be seen, and it is brick.



1936 Walnut Lake School

In the early 1930s a larger school was necessary. The small school was slid on railroad ties from the south side of Walnut Lake Road to the north side on the corner of Eastman Road where it still stands today, though somewhat altered. It was not turned around and what had been the original front entrance of the school became the back door. The building was then used as a general store, run by the Whitmers for many years, and has been continually used for a variety of businesses.



The school continued to grow and, in 1946, was enlarged to four rooms and held 120 students. The same year, a vote was taken to include Walnut Lake School in the Birmingham School District. This took effect the following year, 1947.

Lisa Fenkell remembers:

“In those years there were no fences separating the school from the golf course. In the winter the children brought sleds to use on the course hills during recess. There was also a large playground with swings, monkey bars, teeter-totters, and a merry-go-round. In the classrooms, students learned mathematics, English, social studies, spelling, reading, and penmanship, which required students to dip their wooden pens into the inkwells on their desks.”

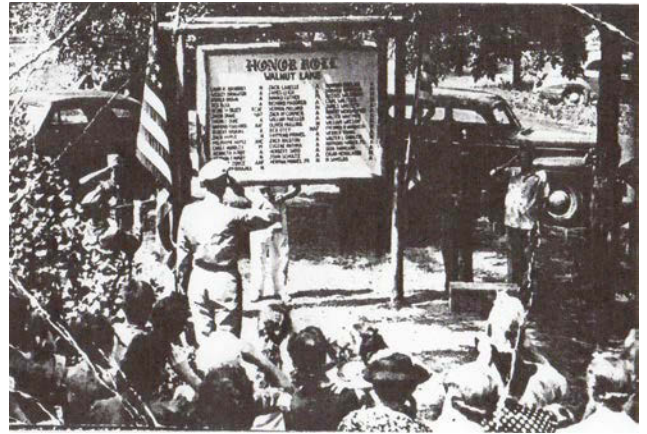


New and Larger 1936 – 1995 Close

In 1936 a new larger Walnut Lake School opened at the original south side location. It had two rooms and held 50 students.



Walnut Lake School Family, no date



Walnut Lake Peace Memorial

In 1995 Walnut Lake Elementary School closed and continues its tradition at West Maple Elementary School in the Birmingham School District.

In the following years, Walnut Lake School continued to grow, both in size and number of students. Another addition was built in 1951, giving the school seven classrooms. In 1954 seven rooms plus a multi-purpose room were added to accommodate Walnut Lake's 200 students. Building expansion continued in 1957 when the number of classrooms totaled seventeen. The final addition of the media center was built in 1968.

A Peace Memorial was built by the Walnut Lake Women's Club in 1972 and dedicated to West Bloomfield Township in 1973. Its purpose was to honor the men in the community who have served their country in any way. A time capsule was also buried near the memorial. When renovations took place later at the Walnut Lake School, a new memorial was constructed next to the tennis courts.

Source: Lisa Fenkell

