

Genesee Country Express

A Brief History of the Buffalo Street School of District No. 11 Springwater and Wayland

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by William Lawrence

On April 17, 1816, five and one-half miles were taken from the west side of Naples and three miles from the east side of Sparta and formed into the town of Springwater. When Livingston county was taken from Ontario and Genesee, February 23, 1821, no change was made in the boundaries of Springwater. Thus, we see that Springwater, as a political subdivision, is older than the county of which it forms a part.

There stood in what is now George Fisher's dooryard, a log building, in which was taught the first school in the town, in 1813-14, by James Blake. This was more than three years before the organization of the town, and probably before the division of the town into school districts. In this building the meeting was held for the organization of the town government, April 9, 1817, then a part of Ontario county.

So far as I have been able to ascertain, no change has been made in the boundaries of this school district since its formation from parts of Springwater and Dansville, in Steuben county. Later the said town of Dansville was divided and Wayland was formed therefrom.

This district was organized at a meeting held (to quote from the first district clerk's book), "at the house of Jesse Hyde, in the town of Springwater, by an order from the school commissioners of the town of Springwater and Dansville on the 4th day of 1836." At this meeting the trustees were authorized to purchase a site for, and to have erected a school house 26 x 24, near the dwelling of John Carpenter. A tax of \$125, voted to be applied on the erection of the house. Those trustees did not perform either of these acts. The district never had a title to this school site, except that gained by long possession, or occupancy, until about 90 years later.

At a meeting on the 22nd of September on the same year, the prospective edifice was changed from 26 x 24 to 21 feet square, to be built of 3-inch plank and provided with a stove - but it wasn't built that year.

The district fathers next met in a house (presumably vacant) then owned by Andrew Spaford on May-day of the next year, 1837. That meeting voted a tax of \$7 to repair the house, in which the meeting was being held, for school purposes, and that a school be kept six months. As to who the teacher of the first six months of school was, the records available do not disclose. We learn from a copy of a report to the school commissioners that he or she received \$30 for the six months; that there were 58 children of school age in the district, 46 of whom attended school.

That May-day meeting of 1837 repeated its command to the trustees to build a schoolhouse 21 feet square, this time specifying "a good framed" building, to be finished by October 1, and increased the tax thereon from \$125 to \$150.

At a subsequent meeting, the size of the edifice was again changed to 20 x 22 feet and the \$150 tax was reaffirmed. We may assume that this was the size of the first building on this site, as the annual school meeting of October, 1837, was held in the school house.

It is worthy to note that, in the year 1838, there were 25 families with 71 children, 70 of whom attended school, and no doubt some families without children, or with children under or over school age. That was an increase of 13 pupils within one year.

We wonder what kind of school was conducted with 70 students in a house 20 x 22 feet, a space of about two and one-half feet square for each boy or girl.

Allow me to quote directly from the record of a meeting held April 25, 1838:

1st. Voted that Ashbil R. Grover serve as moderator.

2nd. That the trustees may hire Moses Coleman to teach the summer school. (This is the first teacher mentioned by name.)

3rd. Voted that the lumber paid to said teacher be divided according to each inhabitant's school bill.

4th. Voted that the lumber that is paid to the teacher be delivered at Farnsworth and Thayer's mills.

5th. Voted that the district bear an equal proportion according to their tax in suing Arnold Gray provided the trustees cannot get it without.

6th. Voted that the trustees shall buy a book for the district and charge it to the district, suitable to copy the records of the district.

In the fall of 1871, the school house burned. At a meeting held December 30 of that year, this building was authorized 20 x 24 feet. The late James Cook, then of Wayland, took the job at \$449.

In 1896, in compliance with the flag law, a pole was erected and a flag purchased, at an expense of \$6.75.

The next year our first school globe appeared. I remember it well. It cost forty cents, and was worth it. In 1896, the old long seats and desks were replaced by more modern furniture, some of which is now in place.

In 1919, a further attempt was made to modernize the school plant by the installation of chemical toilets. They cost \$160.

Although the district, as has been stated, held undisputed possession of the same school site for 90 years no conveyance of the same had been made to the district. In 1926, the site was purchased of the late Jacob Hartz, with the reservation of the right of way across the northeast corner in favor of Henry Grein. The next year and additional amount of land was deeded to Mr. Grein by the district in exchange for a like amount on the south side of the school lot which Mr. Grein purchased of Mr. Hartz and for which the district has a deed from Mr. Hartz.

The last improvement of importance, the drilling of a well, was accomplished in 1931 at a cost of \$110.

The novelist can, and usually does, give his story a happy ending. The historian is often denied that privilege. My closing paragraph is a bit sad.

Finally, in 1936 after having completed just a century of honorable existence and useful work, our school was closed.

Editor's Note: On Saturday, June 19, 1937, a reunion of the residents, former pupils and teachers was held at the Buffalo Street District School No. 11 of Springwater and Wayland.

William Lawrence had a copy of the first clerk's book, copied in 1838, from the two first years' records, and continued by him and Andrew Spaford, for many years. From this and other data Mr. Lawrence wrote a most interesting history, showing the early formation, set-backs, manner of payment of teacher's salary in lumber delivered at the mill, six month terms, size of school, number of families, etc.

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