

## The School that Became the Home of the Women's Institute

The History of Scott's Corners School, S.S. No. 13, Beverly Township

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The land that would be used for the first school in the Beverly Township was on a quarter acre of the one acre lot where Scott's Corners School now stands. It was bought for a mere six dollars. A log school preceded the more sturdy and solid stone school that would be constructed later in the 19th century.

The first school was hewn from log by the men in the area. Inside there would have been desks either fastened to the wall and benches for seats or sometimes a double width desk with hewn planks for stools all made from hewn log as well. It was noted that the pioneering schools in the areas were "primitive, inside furniture meagre, the schools were small square log buildings".

The first lessons would have been written on shingles accompanied by a piece of burnt wood or coal for a pencil. The only text book at the beginning was the Bible until Irish national series of readers came. On cold chilly winter days the school was heated by a fireplace which was not only a great fire hazard but much time was taken towards collecting and cutting firewood.

The teachers were men and because of the small wage, they would have to live in the homes of the parent ratepayers as school was not free at the time.

In 1837 an education bill was passed so that three commissioners and three inspectors were positioned to supervise each township area. The local school board consisted of three trustees a clerk and a collector and the trustees were elected annually. The First Common School Act of 1843 entrusted that the townships be divided into school districts and a few years later into sections.

A couple years after the Act was initiated there was a mention of constructing a stone school in the minutes book entry of October 7, 1845. By 1847 there were eighteen schools in the township.

Originally the school was located on Alex Markle's land on Lot 6. When the plan was decided that a stone school would be built the school board proposed buying the land off of Alex Markle however he refused. Alternatively, Adam Main of the next lot agreed to the school board's terms. In 1850 it was decided that Concession 8, Pt. Lot 7 was to be used to build a stone school. It was named Scott's Corners School after the Scott family who lived near the school.

The contract to build the new school was given to James Kirkpatrick while William McArthur and John B. Keachie were hired on as carpenters. The building was paid in three yearly instalments each totalling \$437.43

which was borrowed from Susanna Ferguson. The building came to a total of 28x47 feet.

The first teacher chosen was James Beattie and was paid 5 shillings for each student for eleven months of attendance. By 1853, there were sixty-six children in attendance between the ages five and sixteen.

In 1862, the school attached a batten woodshed where students, as noted by a past student, "-used to do chin ups on wooden beams on rainy days." Finally a new act was passed in 1871 introducing free schools as compulsory making all public and separate schools free and enforcing attendance of all pupils.

The school grew and the building became not only a means of administrating education but also a place of community activities such as Sunday school and debating teams. Eventually three-quarters of an acre was purchased from William Foreman on the east side of the school to accommodate for a playground area.

The school was an important part of the community and set in the rural settings of Clyde. Memories of a former student claimed to remember an incident where a farmer ploughing the field nearby began to use foul language quite boldly. As the children giggled the teacher hurriedly brought the windows to a close.

Improvements continued into the 20th century, walkway and platform were created and new windows installed. During the depression, however improvements became less common and teacher's pay decreased.

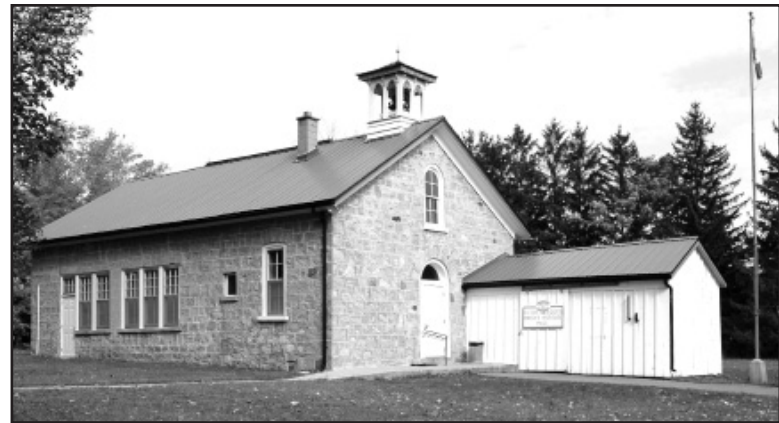
In the 1940's a music supervisor was hired and membership was taken out with the Wentworth cooperative library. Classes soon were expanding and only one teacher was working with children ranging from eight grades. By the 1950's, the school trustees had to make a decision to divide the pupils into two classes with separate teachers. In 1958 a second teacher was hired to teach the junior grades. In 1961, along with other neighbouring schools, Scott's Corners School joined Area 2 and a year later became part of the Beverly Township School Area, section number 13.

Teachers received a meagre pay, one teacher was recorded to have been paid \$17 a month and taught about sixty-five pupils in a single room class. The single room meant that all ages and genders would have to learn amongst one another, and one can imagine the chaotic atmosphere.

In the annals of Clyde, a past student reminisces of the days of the school, "It comes to our minds...arithmetic, spelling, memory work, and not forgetting the hickory stick, the trek to and fro through the fields when the roads were filled with snow; no snow plough in those days, come spring, when nature puts on her new green outfit, and the first warm days, shoes come off and are slung over the shoulder. What nostalgic memories these are."

In due course, the school became too small and children had to go by bus to different schools while only one grade was taught at Scott's Corners by Mrs. John Foreman in 1963 who lived just behind the school. She became the last principal and teacher at the one room limestone schoolhouse.

On November 4th, 1968 the public school board of the township school area of Beverly and the corporation of the township of Beverly sold the property to the Trustees of the Clyde and Scott's Corners Women's Institute under the names: Alice Smith, Marg Green, Marion Johns, Lillian Marcy, and Margaret Keline. As a result the following year the one room schoolhouse



The Clyde and Scott's Corners Women's Institute Hall

was closed as a school.

The Clyde and Scott's Women's Institute Hall was formed on a July day when a few women came together for a cup of tea and decided on creating an institute in 1923. From then on, they have contributed greatly to the community holding their meetings at various homes.

When the opportunity arose to purchase the property and building the institute decided to accept the offer. The Clyde and Scott's Women's Institute Hall (formerly the Scott's Corners School) has not only provided a facility for the institute but also for the local Lions Club and family reunions. The classroom made a good size for the main hall for the institute; the old blackboards once used for spelling exercises and arithmetic were occasionally used for notices of meetings and events. Hoping to capture the history of the school they displayed pictures of students dating back to the early 1900's as well as banners and posters from the many fellow organizations.

As a structure it has provided a place for learning, gathering, teaching and discussing. It has proven to be a fundamental part of the community. It is a great example of our heritage and displays one of the township's earliest examples of stone architecture.

The original structure has undergone a few alterations however an ornate cupola (which contained the school's bell) still remains intact. Due to this it had been designated in 1986 under the Ontario Heritage Act by the North Dumfries Municipal Heritage Committee.

The bell tolled at the designation ceremony reminding former students of their past scholar days. In an article in the Cambridge Reporter a former member of the North Dumfries former LACAC who aided in the designation of the exterior and interior of the building, Mrs. Reain states, "it is important we try our best to preserve a building like this otherwise, how would our children or grandchildren ever get any idea of our history- where we've come from".