

BEN AVON AREA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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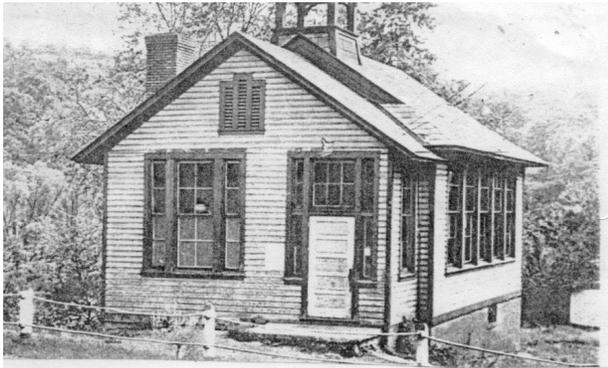


BAAHA is 20!

Notice the Volume is "XX" above. Volume 1, No. 2 was headed February, 1985. The first issue, ironically not dated, was published sometime in the second half of 1984.

Three R's

By Darlene Phillips



YOUNG SCHOOL

Like a lone sentinel, Young School stands alongside Mt. Nebo Road guarding the memories of a by-gone era. Young School was one of many one-room schools that dotted the hillsides and valleys of Ohio Township after the "Free School" Act was enacted by Governor Wolfe in 1834. This Act provided that each County should be a school division, and every ward, township or borough, a school district, replacing subscription or pay schools.

In 1836, Phillip Young, a miller by trade, sold, for the sum of \$1.00, twenty-eight and one-half perches of his land to James Duff, William Courtney, John Means, Joseph Dickson, John Anderson and Nicholas Way, School Directors of Ohio Township. The land lying in Depreciation Tract 131 was to be used for the explicit purpose of erecting a house for use as a public school or, with the permission of the School Directors, for occasional public worship, or other public uses. This school house was designated as School House # 1.

A small log structure was erected consisting of one room. Most of the early schoolhouses were small because enrollment was small. Later, the log schoolhouse was destroyed by fire and a new frame structure was erected about 1862. This is the year a new deed was recorded correcting the original deed and increasing the land size to thirty four perches. A survey of local structures completed by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation in 1982, dates the construction period to 1860-1879. Recollections of several residents whose great-grandparents attended the log schoolhouse confirm "hearing stories of when the log schoolhouse burned to the ground."

RECOLLECTIONS

Recalling memories of their school days during the 1917-1949 era, interviews with Anne Hunt Hoffman,

Harvey Crawford, Howard Stringert, and Viola Shoup Ohler, provide a good insight into a day at Young School.

Children walked to school. There were no buses. Schools were within two and one-half miles walking distance from their homes. Most students had a favorite "shortcut" through the woods or over fields and across the creek to get to school. Harvey Crawford recalled his mother wrapping his legs in newspaper to keep him warm in the deep snow. Girls wore dresses, no slacks, and in the winter they wore "those horrible leggings and rubber boots." It was not unusual for one or two students to ride a pony or bring a sled to school. Later, students were permitted to ride bicycles to school.

The school day began at 9:00 a.m. when the teacher rang a hand bell to summon the students to class. The pledge of allegiance was said while facing the USA flag, then the Lord's prayer was recited and a passage from the Bible was read. Reading, writing and 'rithmetic learned to the rhythm of a hickory stick" was no exaggeration. Lessons were assigned to each grade with two or three grades working at the blackboard at the same time on different subjects. The size of a class varied from one student to as many as six. The entire student body varied from eight to thirty-five students, all taught by one teacher.

Each teacher had their own method of presenting the required subject matter and discipline. In addition to teaching, the teacher was also the janitor, counselor, referee and nurse.

Desks were arranged in five rows facing the teacher's desk with a pot-bellied stove situated in the right rear of the room. At Young School the stove had a thirty-six inch high galvanized guard

that wrapped around it three quarters of the way to prevent students from bumping into the hot stove and provided a convenient place to dry wet mittens and coats. One of the older boys was hired to "open up" before class began to bring in coal and stoke the fire so the classroom would be warm when students arrived. The teacher "banked" the fire at night in preparation for the next day. Five oversized windows on the west side provided light prior to the installation of electricity.



Young School c. 1930

The small vestibule was a multi-purpose area where coats were hung and where drinking water was available in a large crock. A basin was available for "washing up." At times one could find a student standing in the vestibule facing the wall "working off a punishment." Water was carried from a spring, flowing from a hillside, across from the school. Students were "chosen" to do chores. A broom handle, notched in the middle to hold a pail, was carried to the spring by two students to get water. At first a common dipper was used for drinking but later, small paper cups were made available. Black board erasers were taken outside and clapped together, filling the air with chalky white dust. Inkwells were filled and used by grades four

through eight. At the close of the school year, books were "cleaned up" and readied for the next year by students repairing tears and erasing pencil marks. During the summer and Christmas vacation break, the wood floors were oiled with a malodorous crude oil that gassed off fumes that certainly would not pass environmental standards of today.

While younger children copied their letters and used workbooks, the older ones recited their lessons. Older students were allotted time to help the younger ones with lessons. Times tables and spelling bees were heard by all. "You couldn't help but learn because if you missed something one year you probably would hear it again the following year." There were two, fifteen minute recess periods a day and one hour for lunch. There was no cafeteria. Lunch was carried from home in a paper bag or wrapped in newspaper or carried in a lunch pail.

Discipline was accomplished in many ways. If caught chewing gum, the student had to place the gum on their nose and stand in front of the class for fifteen minutes. Cursing meant standing in front of the class with tongue sticking out so a bar of soap could be rubbed across the tongue. Fist-fights were quelled when the two guilty parties had to lie across a chair "with sunny side up" and be paddled. Hair pulling, pushing and other infractions called for the willow switch to be applied to the legs. Writing a hundred sentences on the blackboard was a favorite discipline with many teachers.

Outhouses were located to the rear of the school, one for boys and one for girls. The young ones learned arithmetic very early because permission to get a drink of water was requested by raising

two fingers and to go outside and use the "necessary room" one had to raise three fingers. The outhouses were a favorite target at Halloween. The older boys either tipped them over or moved them off their "privy vault".

Art class was making colorful paper decorations to brighten the classroom at Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. However, the real art was achieved by the older boys "who would chew tablet paper to just the right consistency to make a paper wad then stick it on the end of a ruler and flick it at the overhead lights." A program was presented at Christmas and each student had a "piece to say", usually a poem from memory. Songs were sung to the prompt of the teacher's pitch pipe. Later, the programs were held at the Grange Hall where Dorothy Stringert (Howard's mother) would play the accompaniment on the piano.

In 1949, Dr. Alfred Beattie, County Superintendent of Education, considered the one-room schools inadequate for the job of modern education. "There is no chance for music and art, and physical education is going to and from school." The Ohio Township School Directors decided to improve conditions by sending the seventh and eighth grades to Sewickley and consolidating grades one through six in the three remaining one-room schools. Grades one and two attended O'Neil School, grades three and four, Duff School and grades five and six, Young School. In 1953, the Avonworth Union School District (formed in 1938 and comprised of Emsworth, Ben Avon, Kilbuck Township and Ben Avon Heights) accepted the Ohio Township students on a tuition basis for two years. In 1955, Ohio Township joined the Avonworth Union School District.

Young School was used as a storage building for old school equipment for many years but when the contents went up for auction, Viola Shoup Ohler's bid won her six desks and the girl's outhouse! In 1981, the new owner removed the east side of the building, replaced it with double garage doors and used the structure for an auto repair shop. Later, the east side was replaced with siding and two "Chicago-style" windows were installed. The building was then rented for dance and aerobic classes. The bell in the cupola has long since disappeared, but in 2000 there was a new "ring" at the former Young School when Trinity Jewelers purchased the building and remodeled the interior to display fine jewelry.

Despite many renovations and uses, Young School continues to retain its appearance of a little one-room school house reminding us of our "good old school days."

Annual Report

As of last June 30th, we completed another fiscal year. As always fellow Board members deserve thanks for their dedication and faithful work. All have agreed to continue serving in 2005:

Jean Henderson, Vice President
 Trudy File, Secretary
 Tracy Ferguson
 Ken Jaros
 Bob Kiser
 Darlene Phillips
 B. J. Robertson

Our financial statement shows we continue to break even. The side yards at the log house look great. We make steady progress in collecting oral history interviews. We go to community events to make our presence known and

encourage all residents, young and old, to take an interest in local history. The only negative I can think of is our lack of a permanent office. Support from our mailing list is good, not only with dues, but also through extra donations.

More than money your support in kind words motivates us to keep at it. Thanks to all of you.

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
 July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004

INCOME/EXPENSE

INCOME

Checking Interest	\$ 46.35
Certificate Interest	79.81
Mailing list dues	355.00
Donations	579.00
Items for sale	<u>237.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$1,297.16</u>

EXPENSES

Postage and supplies	\$ 324.93
Maintenance	65.42
Electric service	100.00
Publishing	145.00
Program/Education	60.00
Fund Raising items	0.00
Property Insurance	<u>333.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$1,028.35</u>
NET INCREASE	<u>\$ 268.81</u>

BALANCE SHEET

	<u>6/30/2003</u>	<u>6/30/2004</u>
Cash	\$127.00	\$127.00
Checking	6,476.67	6,665.67
CD	<u>6,939.43</u>	<u>7,019.24</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$13,543.10</u>	<u>\$13,811.91</u>

Notes: The former account from the 1992 Ben Avon Centennial Committee has a balance as of \$3,143.67 as of June, 2004.

An 1880 Teacher's Contract
(reprint from Vol. V, No. 1)

It is agreed by and between Miss Helen Cooper, Teacher, and the Board of Directors of West Bellevue [Ed. Note: former name of Avalon] School District, in Allegheny County, that said teacher shall, under the supervision and exclusive direction of said board and their successors, but subject, nevertheless, to the visitation and lawful authority of the County Superintendent, teach in West Bellevue school house for the term of eight months, at a compensation of \$35.00 per month to be paid monthly, reserving the right to the board of directors for the time being, to dismiss the said teacher at any time whatever, for any of the causes specified in the twenty-third section of the Act of May 8th, 1854 entitled, "An act for the regulation and continuance of a system of education by common schools." It is further agreed that the school house shall be opened at 1/2 past 8 O'clock a.m. School to commence at 9 o'clock a.m. Dinner time from 12 O'clock til 1 O'clock p.m. and the school house to be closed not sooner than 4 O'clock p.m. And further that the regular legal holidays shall be observed, and election days when school house is used for the latter purpose, without any loss of time to the teacher.

It is also agreed that the fire shall be made or caused to be made, and the floor be regularly swept or caused to be swept, in said house, during said term by said teacher, the said board providing the fuel and brushes therefor; and that the actual possession of the school house and premises before mentioned, shall

remain and be considered by all parties as remaining and being at all times in said board of directors and their successors.

**School Bells No Longer Ring
in Ben Avon**
(reprint from Vol. VII, No. 2)

Since the decision to close the Ben Avon School [Ed. Note: at 200-222 Dickson and the north side of Sturgeon] and dispose of the property, all elementary children will be bussed to Ohio Township where an elementary building is being enlarged to care for all kindergarten through sixth grade students. It was July 17th [1990] that students, neighbors parents, and press reporters gathered to watch the bell being moved from the belfry. Duquesne light Company volunteered to move the 2,500 pound bronze bell that was dated 1893. It will continue to call children into school each day for morning and afternoon sessions at Ohio township. Those of us who live nearby the Ben Avon School miss the bell ringing twice a day.

We appreciate your support and that of everyone who sends donations in addition to the mailing list dues.

Nancy Simon	BAH
Jean & Don Clem	Aleppo Twp
Lanis Liggett	Moon Twp
Jean Ackerman	EMS
Anna Bass	Ross Twp
Martha Huddy	Williamsport PA
Jim Bass	Ross Twp
John & Adda Ferguson	BA
Harvey & Barbara Hinch	Moon Twp
Margie McMullan	BA
Lloyd & Patty Corder	BA
John & Frances Haeberle	BA
Margo & Andy Forsythe	Kilbuck
Martin & Jennifer Knuth	BAH
Charles & Sally Davis	BA

Ben Avon Area Historical Association
 c/o 136 Dickson Avenue
 Ben Avon
 Pittsburgh, PA 15202



Please Join Us!

Jean Kratzert	Aliquippa PA
Frank & Rose Meacci	BA
George Prentice	Englewood FL
Peter & Susan Herchenroether	BA
J Kirk & Barbara Hughes	Sarasota FL
William & Mildred Johnston	Farmingdale NY
Jane & John Angelini	BA
Mary Elizabeth Colombo	BA
John Warren	BA
Alice Brown	Cranberry Twp PA
Kathy Street	BA
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Bill & Shirley Sample	Georgetown TX
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Carl & Elaine Weitz	BA
William Shaw	BAH
Paula Templeton	BA
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Robert & Marlene Morrell	Ross Twp PA

Ben Avon Historical Association c/o 136 Dickson Avenue, Ben Avon PA 15202			
Name:			
Address:			
Boro/Township			
Phone:			
Membership:	Family \$10	Indiv. \$5	Other
I would be interested in helping with:			
Articles for Newsletter			
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