

THE STONEPILE: THEN AND NOW

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As you pass through the hamlet of Pultneyville, you can discover many beautiful and captivating landmarks. Each one has an intrinsic value all its own. One of the most unique is an old cobblestone schoolhouse that has been transformed into a home.

This special home holds many memories and experiences of the people who have passed through it. Even if you only spend a few hours in its warm, homey atmosphere, you leave with a special feeling in your heart.

The story of the "Stonepile" transcends many years, each adding another memory to the cobblestone's scrapbook.

The first page of the scrapbook shows a setting in 1808 - a warm September day. Children were scattered along the surrounding dirt roads as they apprehensively walked toward a new log cabin - the Pultneyville schoolhouse. Standing outside to greet them was the schools' first teacher, Mr. Morrison. As the students stepped inside the school they were welcomed by a small room containing a woodburning stove and several rows of desks.

As you look on further into the scrapbook your eyes fall upon the ashes and embers -all that is left of the log cabin schoolhouse after the tragic fire of 1816. However, the ashes are buried and a new schoolhouse can be seen constructed in the same place. The new building, as described by Leon Robine, was made of wooden shingles and was a bit larger than the original. The door was placed facing east and two large windows adorned the northern wall.

The next few pages of the scrapbook are filled with laughter and learning as the Pultneyville schoolhouse continued to pass on knowledge and insight to its students. Then a decision set the stage for a new picture in 1845.

The people of the town decided to tear down the old schoolhouse to make way for a new, bigger and better one - one that would stand for many years to

come. Thus it was built and built very well, for the schoolhouse has one very unique characteristic about its construction. The entire building including the rear wall is all rows of cobblestone. Most structures of its kind had field stones for the back wall, as their builders believed that since no one could see the rear of the house from the road, why waste the time with such little stones.¹

A new large building now stands to the west of Centennial Park. It is unlike any other that has preceeded it. It is not consturcted of logs nor shingles, but of solid rock and concrete. What is this strange new building? It is the new cobblestone Pultneyville schoolhouse.

The building, according to Mr. Leon Robine, had two large windows facing north and south while the door opened to the east, facing Centennial Park. The door was part of the wooden section of the school. This section included the entrance hall with a cloak room on either side of it. This hall opened into one large classroom. Toward the south was the teacher's desk with about six chairs beside it facing the window. In front of the teacher's desk and all the way to the rear of the room were the rows of desks surrounding the woodburning stove in the center. Two rows of desks were positioned in front of the stove, near the teacher's desk. These were reserved for the first, second and third graders. Two more rows, one on either side of the stove ran north to south and held the fourth and fifth graders. The two final rows, stationed behind the stove were occupied by the sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

The fashion in which class was run was simple. When it was your turn to have class, you would go to the front of the room. You would then be seated in the chairs around the window. The other students stayed in their seats and studied. Because the younger students could listen to the older children's classes, it was a common occurrance for a student to skip a grade.

A normal school day began at 8:55 A.M. and continued until 3:55 P.M. A fifteen minute recess in the morning and afternoon, together with an hour off for lunch provided a break in the long day of studying and hard work. Fridays included yet another break.

The younger students looked forward to three words all day Friday; "It's three o'clock". At that time they were allowed to go to the rear of the room and sit with an older student for twenty minutes. To them it was a special treat.

Recess was another treat, especially with all the equipment the backyard contained. It was filled with swings, a teeterboard, a trapeze and a "whirl-a-magig".² A "whirl-a-magig" was a large metal pipe that was anchored vertically into the ground. Four chains were attached to the top and were suspended about three feet off the ground. A few inches from the end of the chain, a wooden seat was attached for the students to sit upon. They would hold on to the chains and run in a circle until they had built up enough momentum to jump onto the seat and ride in a circle.

As recess began the students enjoyed an ongoing joke as the teacher exclaimed, "Stay on school grounds".³ The reason for the laughter was that the property lines ran against the school wall to the west and through the wooden section on the east. But even though the boundaries were rather undefined, the students still stayed close to the school. They played baseball in the park or their favorite new game, "Pom Pom Poleaway", in the front yard.⁴ To play this game two teams were chosen. One person from each team was designated as "it".⁵ Those two people were placed in the middle section while either team stayed on their side of the designated section. The object of the game was to run from your side of the yard to the other teams side without being tagged. If you were caught, it was then your turn to be "it". Recess was soon ended as

some lucky student took pride in ringing the bell. It was time to get back to work.

As you delve deeper into the "Stonepile" scrapbook, the very early 1900's show a new addition to the schoolhouse. The towns people feared the tremendous pressure being exerted on the school walls. Thus a huge cable was placed around the school to insure its strength. Installation of the cable proved to be worth the trouble as the western wall now shows evidence of a large crack.

The new cable was helpful in other ways also. It provided a new challenge for the students during recess. They would spend hours trying to walk the full circumference of the school. They would do it holding on to the cable and walking on the then concrete base of the school.

"Miss Barch, Miss Ammelle, Miss Kirsroch, Miss DeRight and Miss Day" - the teachers step by as quickly as the pages that name them.⁶ Along with more new teachers come new changes. The pictures no longer show a one room school house but a two room setting. A partition was placed in the center of the room in the early 1920's, as classes increased. Now instead of one picture per page and year, the scrapbook displays two.

A typical school year for the children of Pultneyville ran from September 4, 1928 until June 21, 1929. This particular session was taught by Alinda Brundage and Goldia French. Miss Brundage taught the first through fourth graders which included the following students:⁷

<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>
John Deheys	8	Cecil Goulette	8
Ray Eay	11	Jean Burcroff	6
Elywin French	5	Leda Clark	8
Linus French	8	Sylvia Clark	7
Clayton Graham	9	Dorothy Graham	6
Lyle Grinnelle	11	Ida Mae Ginnelle	8

<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>
Tony Heinsbergen	11	Helen Maskins	7
Robert Lergner	5	Anna Heinsbergen	9
William Lerner	7	Ruth Orbaker	7
Cliff Orbaker	8	Florence Wilbur	6
Ken Shippley	8	Janet Wilbur	8
Paul Tricket	8	Edith Young	8
Ray Walvoord	7	Victoria Marcy	8
Willard Omen	8		

Goldia French presided over the other class of fifth through eighth graders who were:

<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Age</u>
Leo Foss	13	Grace Arney	12
Carl Grahour	15	Anna DeRight	12
Earl Lergner	10	Alvarette French	10
Joe Minier	14	Grace Graham	11
Roland Orbaker	11	Reva Helland	14
Landon Osborn	14	Erma Hughes	14
Cauoff Osborn	12	Majorie Wilson	12
Harold Prachel	10	June Wilson	14
Jonathon Walvoord	12	Hermina Young	10
Lyle Warner	11	Helen Burchoff	14
Iva Amon	14		

The students and teachers year began on September fourth and continued through every weekday until October, when a conference day and Columbus day provided a four day weekend. November arrived and marked "no school" on the calendar for the second as another conference was scheduled. Thanksgiving left the schoolhouse empty for a full week during the same month. Christmas vacation from December twenty-fourth until the second of January granted the teachers and pupils another brief respite from their work.

Apprehension and fright pervaded the scrapbook during the last week of January as Regents week rolled in. All eighth graders, and any other student

wishing to graduate to the nineth grade at Williamson Central School, took the Regents. Although most students waited until the eighth grade, some above average students did take the exams at an early age. "Ken Shippy did so at age 11".⁹

A few more one day vacations were scheduled during February and March, but April had none. The month of May ushered in a wave of sickness and despair as an epidemic of diphteria closed down the school from the tenth until the twenty-first. The next week was even more hectic as students went to the doctor and health inspector, "E. H. Lapp" to receive their certificates of inoculation and another that was required to re-enter the school.¹⁰ This other certificate, (see appendix Pg.11) stated that the students disease was no longer communicable.

Every student who was inflicted with a communicable disease was quarantined to their home until they were examined and given a health certificate to state they were cured. "This was to insure that the rest of the students wouldn't get sick".¹¹

The two teachers were each paid \$1094.40 for their services which ended on June twenty-first giving the students and teachers a long break before a new term.

Throughout this book of memories the basic curriculum remains the same. "History, arithmetic, physical training, spelling, English and geography", were all part of a typical schoolday.¹²

By the early 1930's another new game was the center of attraction during recess. It was named "Hickey-I-Over".¹³ In this game one team was placed on each side of the schoolhouse. One person would then attempt to hurl the ball over the roof. If it made it over, the opponent who caught the ball would run

around the school and touch someone with the ball. That person was then a prisoner of the other team. The object was to have all the students end up on one team.

Another new activity during recess was running through the "goldenrods behind Walkers barn", near the school.¹⁴ The children would make paths through the four foot weeds and then play hide-n-seek. There were some students, however, who left the group to cause mischief.

One incident, well remembered by Ray Walvoord happened when a few of his friends put tacks under the tires of the teacher's car. No one would admit to being guilty, so every boy was switched. The harsh sound was even heard by the youngsters in the other room, and as Melba Lund stated, "It taught us all a lesson".

Years and pages flip by as the teachers change from "Miss Brundage and Miss French to Miss Lawrence and Miss Fraclick" and others.¹⁵

The session for September 1, 1932 until June 21, 1933 was a year full of changes for the scrapbook. The partition was removed and Miss Wemes was left to teach the entire first through sixth grades. The seventh and eight graders were bused to Williamson Central School. The reason for these changes was the dispute over the centralization of schools in the 1930's. The only two districts that refused to join the central school were District 4 and District 1. Thus District 1, the Pultneyville Schoolhouse, became the new school for the District 4 students. This, however, wasn't all bad, for with the additional students came a new bus. "The new schoolbus was driven by Floyd Fisher."¹⁶ He is well remembered by the students who rode his bus, for his friendly smile and warm disposition. He never once yelled at the students. He would just use his rear view mirror to look at the ones that were misbehaving. This remarked Frank

Montondo "would burn a hole straight through you".

The insides of the school underwent some changes too. The teacher's desk was once again placed against the south wall, but the blackboards were not behind it any longer. They were left along the east wall. The wood stove was replaced by a coal burning stove placed against the west wall in the corner. The fire was tended by the older boys, who considered it a real treat, for they could stop studying to fetch the coal. The desks were placed in three rows from east to west.

Jinglebells and caroling can be heard as you turn to the pages containing the Christmas memories. Each Christmas the class would take a journey to Gates Hall. They would then prepare Christmas sketches for their parents. Accompanied by pianist "Andrea Eaton", they prepared many plays, one of which was "Poor Little Rich Girl".¹⁷ It stared "Melba Lund".¹⁸ After the production was completed the students would serve cookies and punch to their parents and Santa would stop in to pass out oranges and apples.

Lunch hour was another favorite memory of most of the students. They would travel down to the ice cream parlor and store, which stands where the County Warehouse is now, to purchase ice cream. Some students, such as Frank Montondo and friends, had other ideas. He and a group of friends decided to go fishing during one of their lunch hours. The carefree group set out for an exciting hour of laughter, fun and plenty of fish. That hour ran into two and the boys ran into trouble. Miss Wemes decided to remind them not to be late again. She reached for the four foot hose that sat upon the bookcase. She may not have driven the message into their heads, but she sure sank some pain into four young boy's pants. After that incident the boys "stuck to playing baseball in the park."¹⁹

The days were not all filled with mischief. The students took part in many other learning experiences. They would gain a better understanding of Arbor Day by planting a tree in Centenial Park, and then on Clean-up day they would rake the school yard and weed around the trees.

A sad toll can be heard emitting from the next few pages as the school bell rings for the last time in June of 1943. The students would be attending Williamson Central School.

"The school desks and other equipment were sent to Williamson and the \$2,700 of left-over funds was divided among the 128 taxpayers."²⁰ The barren schoolhouse was not empty for long however. It was auctioned off in 1944 and sold to "Clarence Verbridge."²¹

A new chapter, filled with memories, begins as Charles Walker moves into the renovated schoolhouse. The wooden section of the home was transformed into a kitchen and a storage room. A bathroom and two bedrooms were constructed to the south side of the home and a large den and family room added. To add the finishing touches a cellar was dug, the ceiling was lowered and a north door was positioned between the two northern windows.

One evening "Mr. Walker, a teacher at Sodus Central School, invited a few seniors over for dinner", one of whom was David E. Cooper.²² From the moment Mr. Cooper saw the cobblestone home, he fell in love with it. Because his family was losing their home and Mr. Walker was moving, the obvious outcome transpired. The house was sold to the Claude Cooper family.

The next few pages of the scrapbook are highlighted with photographs from 1945, as the Cooper family moves in. The Cooper family lived together in the warmth of the old schoolhouse from 1945 until 1957. It was that year, after the death of her husband Claude, that Grace, with her son David moved out of the cobblestone. She gave the house to her other son Steven and his new wife Jean.

Jean and Steven lived in the cobblestone for many years. Finally in 1978 after her husband died, Jean decided to sell her home of twenty-one years. Her reason centered around the fact that she frequently arrived at work, in uptown Williamson, realizing she had forgotten her glasses and it was eight miles back to the "Stonepile", a name given to the home by Steve Cooper in the late 1940's.

The cobblestone was then sold to David Cooper, the person who had loved it for many years.

Furniture going out, furniture coming in, is the theme of the next few pages as Mr. Cooper and his lawn boy, Matthew DeVries moved Jean out and David in.

Changes, changes and more changes! New pictures were being snapped more quickly than they could be added to the scrapbook. Mr. Cooper hired Richard Sutherland to help him and Matt remodel his new home.

Matt was given the task of painting the trim and windows. He also landscaped the yard. Mr. Sutherland began his work on the interior with the east door. It was changed into a large window and the door was placed only a few feet from it, in the corner of the south wall. Next the ceiling was lowered and paneling was placed in the den and family room. Pictures, shelves and cabinets were added as finishing touches in those rooms. The final task was the renovation of the kitchen. The storage room was torn down so as to enlarge the room. Paint and carpet completed the job. The exterior of the home was completed as David Urban hand carved a plaque with a replica of the "Stonepile". The house had officially received its name and the renovation was completed - was it?

Another new renovation came to the "Stonepile" in 1980. There were boards in the kitchen that covered the cobblestone wall of the house. Mr. Cooper

decided to enhance the beauty of his kitchen by exposing the hidden stones. When he and Matt DeVries tore the boards down, they found something very interesting. A white stone with four girls names written upon it in pencil. The names were "Edith, Louretta, Mary and Bertha".²³ Mr. Cooper believes that they were written on the stone in about 1898. After they completed that wall they turned to the other kitchen wall, toward the front of the house. Realizing the stone would be covered by kitchen appliances, they only exposed a small shadow box of the stone.

After a few weeks, the exposed stone began to chip so it was preserved with a coat of oil - but not before Matt DeVries had the chance to add his name on a stone to match the others from years ago.

One unique characteristic about the "Stonepile" is that When Mr. Cooper purchased the house it only came with four tenths acres of land. But Mr. Cooper has found a way around this dilemma.

Every Christmas, since 1979, Mr. Cooper has purchased a live Christmas tree to plant in the spring. Thus each year he addes a bit more of Centennial Park to his yard as the trees are planted further from the house. Also his lawnboy helps by mowing out to the farthest tree.

A new picture was just recently added to the scrapbook as a new pathway to the rear door was constructed by Matt DeVries. It is comprised of lake stone, and runs from the driveway around the bell to the door.

The story of the "Stonepile" scrapbook is a story of change. The cloak room no longer smells of mud and cold, but of fresh coffee. The classrooms are no longer furnished with desks, bookcases and blackboards but instead with carpet, furniture and pictures upon the walls.

One familiar sound still echoes to remind people of the building's past history. It is a bell that is rung by all who enter the house. Although it is not the original bell of years ago, it still serves the purpose of calling friends together.

The pages of the scrapbook are filled with change, growth and memories, but there are still bare pages to fill. No matter what the future holds for the "Stonepile" it will never be forgotten, for everyone that has and will pass through it, gains from its quaint and rich past.