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Eagle Harbor schools

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Our photo shown here was taken in 1900 when the new Eagle Harbor two-room schoolhouse was completed. Grading around the school yard was yet to be completed.

This handsome educational structure was designed in the Colonial Revival style with architectural details that embellished the school building. We note for instance the attractive dome on the belfry surrounded with railing. The little canopy over the front door and the oval window add charm to the building.

At the time this was built it was a great improvement over the earlier schoolhouse that is also seen in our photo. School Lane shows here in the with the original cobblestone schoolhouse behind the new one.

Once the new school was being used, the old one was demolished. It was built around 1840 as a one-room school and served School District No. 7 of Gaines for 60 years.

Ironically, the new school building also served the district well for a lmore than 60 years. However in 1963 it was the last district school in Orleans County to close its doors.

There were more than 130 school districts in Orleans County during the 19th century. Each district had its own one-room schoolhouse. By the end of the 19th century a few more populated districts built two-room schools such as: Eagle Harbor, Barre Center, Carlton Station and Shelby Center.

Once busing became available, the need for so many districts was no longer necessary.

It occurs to me that the cobblestone school once located at Eagle Harbor was



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probably also seen in its time as a very fine structure. Being built of cobblestones it no doubt was seen as a building of some aesthetic appeal.

In fact, 16 different school districts throughout Orleans County built schools in the cobblestone manner. Six of these were located in the town of Gaines. Five still remain today now, but they are used for other purposes.

Countywide we've lost five cobblestone schools out of the original 16. That still leaves us however with a total of around 100 cobblestone buildings existing currently in the county.

These unique time intensive buildings were largely built during the second quarter of the 19th century. They represent the first real era of prosperity people started to experience in this region once the Erie Canal was completed in 1824.

It's true the people of School District 7 in Eagle Harbor made a statement with their fine new

building in 1900. But two generations before, an equally fine building reflects those people's sense of values as well.

The 1900 school remains today as a residence after serving as a community center and post office following its school function after 1963.