



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

KNOWLESVILLE SCHOOLHOUSE

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**Bethinking
of Olde
Orleans**

The first schoolhouse in Knowlesville was built of logs in 1817, and stood on the west side of the street north of the canal. William Knowles, the first settler, was instrumental in its building. It not only served as a school but was also a place for religious worship until church facilities were provided. It is believed this structure burned in 1850 after it was abandoned as a schoolhouse.

In 1839, a stone school building was erected in the village of Knowlesville on the east side of the street near the cemetery. Since there were no pictures of this school available in the early part of this century, Fanny A. Furman made a painting of it in 1914 from how she remembered it.

The painting was presented to School District No. 15 for painting in the schoolhouse. A photo of the painting accompanies this article. Because Furman was not a trained artist, it is difficult to tell if this schoolhouse was quarried stone or cobblestone. The records simply indicate stone and to date give no indication of its demise.

In about 1858, the inhabitants of District 15 began to realize that the old stone schoolhouse was hardly in keeping with the times. After many meetings with two adjoining districts, it was decided to unite into one District 15, making one of three.

It was also finally decided to erect a one-story frame building containing two rooms. This was finished for the winter term of the school year 1860-61 and was located on the west side of Main Street at the southern outskirts of the village.

In September 1886, a fire of undetermined origin burned the school to the ground. School was finished out that year in rooms furnished by the district, down in the village.

Following this calamity, much controversy arose among district inhabitants about the style of the new

schoolhouse. After many meetings with strong arguments, it was finally decided to erect a two-story brick building with three rooms, and a basement for heating apparatus on the burned-out site.

The school was finished for the winter term of 1887-88. It was described in the records of that time as a fine, convenient and well-furnished school. It was used until 1955, when District No. 15 centralized with Medina, and now serves as a residence.

From a newspaper story about the school printed in 1955, we find this account:

One oldtimer tells this story about it: "Just about the time the old schoolhouse burned there were some deaths of the wealthiest people in the place. The estates were being settled and their splendid proportions were of record for all to inspect."

"When the new school building was designed the shrewd trustee, A.P. Dean, the proprietor of the Knowlesville hotel, conceived the idea of not only replacing the building but designing for the future."

"This he did, and at the same time had spread upon the assessment rolls the full amount of the above mentioned estates, which were of a valuation almost as large for taxation purposes, as all the rest of the district combined. That's one of the reasons that Knowlesville had such a fine school structure."

This former fine brick schoolhouse now serves for residential purposes.

Notice: The county historian will give a free slide presentation on Victorian Mourning Art at 7 p.m. Oct. 29 at the Pullman Memorial Church, 10 East Park St., Albion.