

S.S. No. 1

Cassel School

Lot 23, Concession 16, East Zorra Township
1.5 kilometres south of the hamlet of Cassel



Time brings changes. These days a big snowstorm or freezing rain or even dense fog will result in a decision to close schools in the area until the weather event has passed. These weather events could occur several times in any given year. Not so in the days of the one-room school when children walked, often a mile or more each way, no matter the weather. Available records from S.S. 1 - Cassel School tell us that the school closed on three occasions only. Once was for an epidemic of scarlet fever. Diphtheria in the community caused a second closure. The third and last was in 1965 when the school closed for good.

An even better example of time bringing changes also occurred at Cassel School. The year was 1928. The teacher at the time was brought before the County Police Court on a charge of bodily injury. She had assaulted a 7-year-old student across the back with a pointer. The teacher pled guilty. The Crown Attorney, however, saw things in a different light. He firmly stated his belief that the school trustees were largely to blame for what had occurred. The teacher was supposed to look after 59 pupils in several different grades ... teaching all of them along with maintaining discipline in the schoolhouse. This was simply too much to ask of any one woman without impairing her nervous system. The Magistrate agreed and went on to voice his concern that people would believe the teacher was wrong in using corporal punishment. The only thing wrong, in his opinion, was that she used the wrong instrument. She should have used the strap and not a pointer. The Magistrate favoured withdrawing the charge altogether with the teacher paying the costs of the court. This resolution proved agreeable to everyone, including the child's parents.

This event notwithstanding, Cassel School was a positive experience for the hundreds of students that passed through its doors.

The red-brick schoolhouse was built in 1837 on a one-acre lot just south of Cassel. In the early days there were two entrances at the front and one at the back. The first teacher lived in a log cabin at the south end of the schoolyard.

Over the years many improvements were made. Some, like electricity, gave added functionality. Some were more educational in nature like the addition of a manual training bench and tools. The school yard also saw changes. The spruce trees planted in 1890 were supplemented with shrubs, new walkways and a fence to improve the outward appearance. People in the community were proud of their school and worked to ensure it was always kept in a good state of repair and always had as many up-to-date amenities and educational tools as deemed practical.

As with every school of every size, the stories always centre around the students and the teachers. Cassel School was known for its reunions ... 1926, 1931, 1951 and 2002. Each was well attended and each was full of reminiscences of good times at school.

Over 100 people came to the 1951 reunion, including all 10 pupils of the 1901 Entrance Class along with their teacher, Mr. Fred Case, who travelled from Indianapolis for the event. Even though it had been 50 years since he saw them, Mr. Case called all his pupils by name as they came through the gate. All except one, a former student who was now wearing glasses. Everyone from the 1901 class talked about the sore arms they had when writing their entrance exams. There was a smallpox epidemic in the community at the time and each pupil had just been vaccinated.

The 2002 reunion was perhaps a little bittersweet. Cassel School had closed in 1965. It sold by auction and torn down a few years later. Perhaps it made the memories all the more poignant. Over 200 former students, teachers and family enjoyed all the displays of school photos and memorabilia. Cameras were everywhere. The stories and the laughter filled the afternoon. A big laugh came when one former teacher recalled that on her first day of teaching at Cassel she asked her students what they called the big cement things attached to the barns. She was from the Nova Scotia coast and had never seen a silo. As the afternoon wound to a close, Leona Bender summed up the Cassel School experience. "I don't say return to the one-room schoolhouse" she concluded "but we don't consider ourselves deprived. We had a dedicated teacher and a stable rural community. That school served us well. It helped us develop character".

The Tavistock & District Historical Society has a collection of material from all the schools in the area.

Specific to S.S. No. 1, Cassel School, we have articles, stories and photos as detailed in the list following. Some of this material was prepared by the Princess Elizabeth Women's Institute; some by our Historical Society; and some donated by former students. We've included a few photos here. If you would like to see any or all of the material please call one of the telephone numbers in Contacts on this website to make an appointment to visit the museum / archives. The Historical Society would be very appreciative of any material you may wish to donate related to our local schools.

Photos:

- school exterior (several angles) - no dates
- 1965 exterior
- 1966 exterior
- 1985 exterior
- 1870s students - no names
- 1901 entrance class - names

- students - no date and no names
- 1907 students - some names
- 1908 students - names
- 1910 students - some names
- 1926 students - names
- 1929 - Senior IV students, Senior III students, Junior IV, Junior III, Primer - most names (filed in Cassel Book)
- 1930 - Primer, Junior I, Junior II, Junior III, Junior IV, Senior III, Senior IV - most names (filed in Cassel Book)
- 1932 students - names
- Dorothy Wettlaufer and Eileen Wettlaufer outside of school - no date
- 1946 students - names
- 1951 reunion - 3 newspaper photos
- 1958 students - almost all names
- 1964-65 - names (filed in Cassel Book)
- 2002 reunion organizing committee

Newspaper Stories

- 1931 reunion
- 1951 reunion
- 2002 reunion

Listing of Teachers at S.S 1

and more!

Scroll down for photos.



S.S. 1 - 1946

Front Row - Clayton Stere, Lester Zehr, Robert Stock, Clare Bray, Daniel Zehr, Doug Wettlaufer, James Malcolm, Bill Welch, Earl Taylor

Second Row - Helen Keinz, Dorothy Leach, Annie Mae Zehr, Barbara Taylor, Gwen Leach, Dorothy Wettlaufer, Wilma Langfield, Ann Pearson, Elizabeth Welch

Third Row - Donald Pearson, Glen Zehr, Shirley Langfield, Jean Ross, Laverne Doering, Ronald Leach

Fourth Row - Clarence Langfield, Clifford Pletsch, Kenneth Henry, Barbara Becker, Shirley Bray, Joyce Leach, Bill Bray, Mrs. Velma Smith (teacher)



S.S. 1 - 1958

Teacher: Miss Elaine Otto

First Row - ?, Sheila Ruby, Diane Zehr, Sharon Becker, Karen Becker, Susan Kaufman, Donna Brenneman, James Lichti, Jim Iutzi

Second Row - Brenda Zehr, Linda Ferguson, Billie Shrader, Sharon Zinn, Gerald Ross, ?

Third Row - Ruth Lichti, Donna Stock, Doreen Shrader, Harold Zinn, Larry Ross, Connie Becker, Brian Iutzi, Peter Zehr, Paul Zehr

Fourth Row - Carolyn Jutzi, Fay Shrader, Roy Malcolm, Marie Zinn, Ron Becker, Dale Zehr, Hazel Zehr



S.S. 1 - 1965-65

Front Row - Kris Kaufman, Joe Thomson, Barry Zehr, Dale Brodrecht, Joyce Zehr, Kevin Zehr, Debbie Brodrecht, Joyce Kropf

Middle Row - Linda Stock, Gwen Zehr, Rosie Zehr, Carl Steinman, Jim Zehr, Muriel Thomson, Mary Zehr, Douglas Zehr, Jane Kaufman, Betty Crunbel, Janice Zehr, Pauline Ruby

Back Row - Mrs. Edith Henderson (teacher) Larry Steinman, Robert Ferguson, Dwight Zehr, Joe Zehr, Vicky Stock, Cheryl Zehr, Sandra Fishback, Kathy Kaufman, Tom Roth, Philip Ruby, Brenda Iutzi, Jack Zehr, Paul Roth



