

S.S. No. 15

Rockett's School

Lot 25, Cassel Sideroad, East Zorra Township
between Hwy 59 and the 11th Concession



The one-room schoolhouses had many things in common, the chief one being that when the student population outgrew the existing building the ratepayers often contracted to build a whole new school. Such was the case at S.S. No. 15, more familiarly known as Rockett's School.

The first S.S. No. 15 was a log structure erected in the 1840s just north of Hickson on the corner of Lot 25, Concession 12 (Hwy. 59). There were so few schools in the area that some children travelled 4 or 5 miles to attend class.

The second S.S. No. 15 was built in 1858 or 1859 on the Cassel Sideroad on Lot 25, about halfway between the 11th and 12th Concessions. The first teacher, Adam Sutherland, earned \$250 a year from which he supported a wife and children and paid rent on their family home. Sutherland made a bit of extra money working for the local farmers during the summer.

The second school was frame construction. The old records note that the walls were riddled with holes gnawed by squirrels. Even though paper was stuffed in the holes each Fall it wasn't uncommon for snow to drift in on windy wintry days. An old box stove at the back of the school seemingly could never compete with the draft and the caretaker, finding the kindling always damp, would place the wood on the stove all night to dry it out. This proved disastrous in 1885 when the kindling caught fire and the schoolhouse burned down. That wasn't end of the problems with the second school. A well dug on the property provided drinking water but of poor quality. This was blamed on the cemetery across the road, an opinion we perhaps don't want to think too much about.

Even though there were some issues, the education was first class. The subjects taught at this time were reading, writing, geography, spelling, history, grammar and arithmetic. Year end examinations were oral, not written.

The third and final schoolhouse, built in 1885, was a white brick building constructed on the same site as its predecessor. The school was designed by architect Charles Zellner (Tavistock) and built by Kalbfleisch & Schaefer (Tavistock) at a cost of \$2,000 of which some part was covered by insurance. By this time S.S. No. 15 was known as Rockett's School in honour of the family from whom the land was obtained.

Over the years Rockett's School saw a great many improvements. There were physical improvements and new amenities inside, landscaping upgrades outside and new school programs like hot lunches and manual training. S.S. No. 15 was the first school in Oxford County to have music classes and the first to have hydro.

By the 1950s things were starting to change. Beginning in 1959 Grades 7 and 8 were bussed to Hickson Central School with Grades 1 to 6 remaining at Rockett's. S.S. No. 15's long and prosperous existence ended in 1965. The school was closed. The building was sold and converted into a home.

There were two reunions at Rockett's School. The first was in 1939 when things were still going strong. The second was in 1996 long after it had closed. The 1996 reunion was a wonderful day with about 150 former teachers and students reliving many good memories at their one-room schoolhouse.

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

Specific to S.S. No. 15, Rockett's School, we have articles, stories and photos as detailed in the list following. Some of the material was prepared by the Hickson Women's Institute in their Tweedsmuir Books; 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 in 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 and any information you can offer to help date or name records that are incomplete.

Print Material

- newspaper story "Many Advances With Years Made At East Zorra School" - dated about 1937
- "Early School Details Told In East Zorra" - by Kathryn Hansuld (from the Hickson W.I. Tweedsmuir History Book) ... includes lists of Trustees, Secretary-Treasurers and Teachers
- Tavistock Gazette story "From Nixon To Hickson - Mary Alice Roth has a long history of community service" dated 2009
- newspaper article "Three R's Taught at S.S. 15 East Zorra Almost 100 Years" dated 1939
- invitation to the 1996 reunion
- newspaper article "Sidelines - A happy reunion in East Zorra" dated 1996

Photos

- circa 1881 school photo ... frame school
- school photo ... brick school, no names, no date
- 1917 school photo with names
- circa 1920 school photo with names
- 1924 school photo with names
- 1928 school photo with names
- 1934 school photo with names
- 1936 school photo with names
- 1938 school photo with names
- circa 1943 - 1948 school photo with names
- school photo ... no names, no date
- 1960 school photo with some names
- 1939 Reunion several, different sizes, some names
- school exterior (2)
- hockey teams ... S.S. 15 and S. S. 8, no dates, some names
- 1996 reunion ... many photos and names
- former S.S.15 now a home
- miscellaneous snapshots... various dates, some names

DVD

School Days - with teachers who taught in one-room schools ... Mary Alice Roth, Ruth Rosenberg and Kaye Bickle

See the next 6 pages for photos.



S.S. 15 East 3rd

Schoolhouse # 3

date of photo not known



S. S. # 15 East Zorra around 1920

Back Row: Alma Wettlaufer, Elizabeth Stewart, Gertie McKay, Jim Abell, Harry Morgenroth,
Stanley Abell

Middle Row: Susannah Rudy, Gladys Abell, Ella Ross, Violet McGregor, Bernice McKay,
Ruth Burton, Marguerite Corp, Edna Morgenroth

Front Row: Jack Ross, Alec McKay, Arnold Burton



EAST ZORRA S. S. # 15 SCHOOL
1934

- L-R, back : Margaret Rowe; Jean Mutch; Elmina Albrécht; Lenore Knudsen;
Teacher: Selma Weicker; Myrtle McGregor; Jean Rowe; Grace Ward; Beth Murray.
- 2nd row: Blanche Goring; Audrey Mutch; Audrey Morgenroth; Violetta Yantzi;
Doris Roi; Lucille Albrecht.
- 3rd row: Russell Yausie; Wilfred McGregor; Howard Brown; Fred Mutch; Frank Knudsen;
Wilmer Bender; Lloyd Wettlaufer; Willis Roi; Gordon Lawson; Ralph Chapman.
- front: Bob Knudsen; Claire Brown; Jack Knudsen; Purvis Rowe; Frank Bickle;
Wayne Wettlaufer; Bill Lawson; Harold Wettlaufer; John W. McKay.



Then and Now
dates not known for either photo

S. S. # 15, East Zorra
Between the years 1943-1948

Back Row -Teacher – Marion Crewson, Lloyd Van Sickle, Earl Brenneman, Lester Albrecht, Eric Bickle,

Illa Bickle, Anna Beryl McKay, Jean Ward, Ella Mae McKay, Vivian Rowe

Middle Row – Don Roth, Edgar McKay, Art Bender, Nelson Albrecht, Cecil McKay, Bertha Rockett,

Helen Roth, Ruth Weisman, Elda Weisman

Front Row – Bobby Van Sickle, Francis Wettlauffer, Leonard Smith, Irene Bickle, Margaret Smith,

Mary Ellen Schlegel, Margaret Swartzentruber, Jane Burton

Absent: Ivor Smith



S.S. # 15
 15 September 1960
 Teacher - Mary Alice Roth

- 4th Row - Susan Yausie, Jim Brenneman, Paul Yausie, Rosemary Yungblut, Hugh Brenneman, John Muxworthy
 3rd Row - MaryLou Bender, Linda Oakes, Shirley Roth, Linda Rudisuela, Judy Bender, Rosemary Gerber, Janet Furtney, Donna Rudisuela
 2nd Row- Stuart Bender, Brian Gerber, Glen McGregor, Jim McKay, Willard Schwartzentruber , Don Furtney
 Front Row - Ken Rudisuela, Dennis Wilker, Dale Wilker, Rob Chambers?

S. S. # 15 School Reunion at the home of Earl and Helen Brenneman 24 August 1998- 1996



Earl Brenneman and Dorothy (Bale) Wilker
Back ground-
Frank Bickle, Donna and Harold Wettlaufer,
Nelson Albrecht



Ethel Rudy,
Roseanne (McKay) Bender



Earl Brenneman, Doris (Abell) Stevens,
Dorothy (Bale) Wilker, Elmina (Albrecht)
Schwartzentruber, Margaret (Rowe) King
Across the page- Helen and Ethel Rudy, Bernice (McKay) Wilhelm, Gordon McGregor, Edna Morgenroth



Harold Wettlaufer, Marion Crewson, Earl
Brenneman, Gordon McGregor



Then and Now
Neither photo is dated.



