

### **Town Hall School, 1840 - 1957**

The first Town Hall School, 1840-1851, built on the Geddes farm, was a wood building with two windows on either side, "about 60 rods East of Murray's house." After the brick school was built in 1852, this was moved and used for various farm purposes.

The first Geddes came to this area in 1824, and the family possesses the 1827 deed to the farm signed by President John Quincy Adams. In 1852, William Geddes leased land for a school at the corner of Morgan and Thomas Roads to Pitt (now Pittsfield) district for 99 years for 6 cents per year.

The second Town Hall school was a brick building constructed in 1852 at the southeast corner of Morgan and Thomas roads. That building was destroyed. The third Town Hall school, a still existing wood structure, was built in 1895 at a cost of \$677.50. This one-room school served as a social center for families in the community. Holiday celebrations were highlights of the year for all. From the 1880s, until the doors closed in 1957, student enrollment remained in the 30-40 range. One year during the Depression there were only two students in attendance. At least 97 teachers taught here during the 105 years the school was in session.

The school was moved to the campus of Eastern Michigan University on 7 July 1987 and dedicated on 22 October 1988, and stands today as a tribute to the university's commitment to teacher education.

*Adapted from History of Town Hall School, District #3, Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, State of Michigan*



*The third Town Hall School built in 1895 at the southeast corner of Morgan and Thomas roads; relocated to the campus of Eastern Michigan University in 1987. Photos show the restored school at its current site.*

Note: The following account was written by the students attending Town Hall School during 1940-1941.

The first school building was made of a wood frame. It was about 60 rods East of Murray's house. After the second school building was built, the first school building was moved to Smirthwait's. Then it was moved to George McCanley's and from there to the Humphrey's farm. Now it is used for a cattle pen. All the light the school had was two windows on each side of the School Building.

The second school building was built around 1852. It stood about 5 or 6 feet away from the East fence. It was made of brick. The desks were made by carpenters. The seats were five feet long and made to hold 2 children. There were three rows of seats. The children had to carry water from the neighbors. The stove used three foot wood. Then they got a round stove, it used shorter wood. They didn't have a big bell so they used a small hand bell instead. The school used small alarm clocks to tell time. The first blackboards were not of slate.

Sometimes there were 30 pupils or more. They attended school to the age of 18 & 19 years.

Some of the earlier books for 1880 are: Sander's Reader, Sanders-Spellers, Robinson's-Arithmetic, Eclectic-Geography, Barne's-Geography, and the Spencerian-copybook.

The books for the year 1894 are: Harpers-Readers, Sander's-Spellers, Robinson's-Arithmetic, Olney's-algebra, Harper's-Geography, Swinton's-Grammar, Townsend's-Civil Government, Barner's-History U.S., Band's Physiology and Spencerian-Copybook

The present woodshed was built in 1854. It had a new roof in 1900.

The present school building was built in 1895. Electric lights were put in the school building in 1930. The old furnace was put in 1896, the present one was installed last year, 1940. The bell in the present school was put up in 1895. The present case of maps, curtains, clock, desk, and chair were bought from the proceeds of a box social around 1900. The globe, and cupboard were secured about the same time.

The children held plays at Christmas time.

The boundaries of the school district are, North one mile, South one mile, East  $\diamond$  a mile, West  $\diamond$  a mile to the railroad. The corners are all jogged.

The present trees were planted by hand. The cherry tree was planted by Mr. Feigel's father. The lawn was graded after the school was built.

The Town Hall was built around 1850.

Some of the earlier settlers are: J. K. Wallace, S. A. Morgan, E. L. Aiken, Edward Fyler, J. F. Smith, WM. Geddes, J. Marricolt, and Elsaac Farnell.

Some of the earlier directors are 1854 J. K. Wallace, 1856 E. D. Wallace, 1860 E. L. Aiken, and 1854 V. Fyler. The present MR. John Feigel has been a director for the last 50 years.

Sometimes there was a man teacher in the winter, and a woman teacher in the summer. Some teachers were paid between \$18.00 and \$25.00 a month.

The school board pays 6 cents a year for the use of the land.

The location of the school is on the corner of Thomas Rd. and Morgan Road.

The foregoing information was secured from a talk which Mr. John Feigel gave to the pupils on Thursday afternoon, January 16, 1941. The book lists, the early settlers of the district and the early directors were furnished by him on that occasion.

Excerpts from the Official Record Book of John B. Geddes.

Washtenaw County, Pitt Township, Member of School District #7 January 20, 1836: In compliance with an order from the school commissioner dated January 4, 1836, a meeting was held on January 20, 1836 at the house of William W. Harwood in said district to elect officers for the said district.

The following officers were elected: Directors, V. Tyler, John A. Farner, William W. Harwood, William E. Gorden - Sec'y. Alexander Gorden - Treas. Charles Woodard - Clerk. Eli Ward - Collector.

February 10, 1836: A meeting was held at the house of Charles Woodard and a resolution passed: 1. To build a Plank House 18' x 22' on the ground. 2. To build brick chimney. 3. That the inhabitants shall vote the site of the School House. 4. That this meeting be adjourned to Saturday the 20th of February 1836.

February 20, 1836: A meeting of the inhabitants in School District #7 in the township of Pitt was held at the house of Charles Woodard. A resolution was passed: 1. To build school house on southwest corner of Charles Woodard's land. 2. To be built by bidding off at vendue by the lowest bidder.

September 24, 1836: A meeting was held at the School House in District #7. A resolution was passed: 1. To put a ceiling in said schoolhouse as high as the windows. 2. That a table, chair, waterpail, and door locks be furnished. 3. That a tax be levied to pay the expenses of the above articles.

September 1838: Report of meeting: 1. Scholars between ages of 5 and 17 - 24. 2. Number attended 20. 3. Money levied in District #7 \$81.68. 4. Books used were English, Readers, and Spelling Books, and Cubbs Elementary. 5. School kept 2 months.

October 10, 1838: Meeting of taxable inhabitants at the school house in District #7 in the township of Pitt elected officers for the ensuing [sic] year as the law directs. A resolution was passed. 1. To have 4 months winter school. 2. To have 3 months summer school. 3. To raise \$30 for support of school. 4. To adjourn meeting until October 8th at 3 o'clock P.M.

October 8, 1838. A resolution was passed to 1. Finish school house comfortable for keeping school. 2. To collect \$25 from the district to defray expenses of finishing the school.

December 21, 1838. Voted to raise \$25 by tax to complete payment of \$19.75 which is due on building and to purchase handirons, water pail and chair.

E. L. Aiken, a qualified teacher commenced December 3, 1838 and taught 3 months at \$15 per month.

December 25, 1838 Report on tax levies were: 1 First levy \$24.46. 2. Second levy \$25.00. This was for finishing school and purchasing handirons, water pail, cup, chair, and district book.

February 15, 1839. Report of Public Money received of John Hoy, township Clerk for the benefit of Primary School was \$15.30 which was paid to E. L. Aiken, teacher.

March 22, 1839. Meeting held by board in district #7 pursuant to notice according to law made out tax list according to each taxable inhabitant in said district, the same being posted according to law.

This is the last reference to the township of Pitt. Hereafter it is Pittsfield Township District #7.

Mary Dun a qualified teacher commenced in April 1839 and taught 3 months at \$13 per week.

Sarah Squeir taught for a term of 8 weeks July 9-Sept. 3, 1839 \$13 per week. This was an extra term by the request of the inhabitants of the district.

School Inspectors, David Wilsy, E. W. Whitmore and John Hay, issued an order for a district meeting to be held at the school house on Thursday, November 23, 1843 at 6 O'clock P.M.

At this time District #7 became District #3 with its boundaries as formed by the inspectors as follows: S.1/2, S. 15; S. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 16; E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of S. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  and E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of N. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28.

March 26, 1844 William W. Harwood, Director of District #3 received notice for the school inspectors that the E  $\frac{1}{4}$  of N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 26, and E  $\frac{1}{4}$  S. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 23 was detached from District 3 and attached to District 6.

On February 24, 1847 at 6 O'clock P.M. pursuant to public notice. A meeting of the taxable inhabitants was held at the school house for the purpose of changing the site of the school house from its present location to the S.W. corner of the N.E. quarter of Section 22. The motion resulted in 9 yeays and 11 nays.

Another meeting for this purpose pursuant to public notice was held March 11, 1847. This time the motion to move the school house to the above mentioned site carried. At the same meeting a motion was passed to collect \$20 from the taxable inhabitants of the district for the purpose of fitting a stove and stove pipe and repairing the house.

At the annual meeting of the board held at the school house September 25, 1848 the board "voted to have three and a half months school during the winter to be taught by a male teacher and five months school in the summer to be taught by a female teacher." The minutes also indicate that the board voted to apply two thirds of the public money for the winter school and one third for the summer school.

At the annual meeting held at the school house September 24, 1849 it was 'voted to have four months school during the winter to be taught by a male teacher and five months during the summer to be taught by a female teacher." It was also "voted to apply one half of the public money to the winter term and the other half to the summer term." IT was "voted that each taxable, furnish one fourth of a cord of wood to each scholar he sends before the school commences or he shall be liable to pay for it to the school board."

In 1850 it was similarly noted [sic] to have nine months divided into the winter and summer terms but in 1851 the winter term was reduced from four to three months. At the annual meeting of that year, held September 29th, it was voted to build a new school house on the now corner of the N. E.  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 22, the house to be built of brick with other kinds of material necessary to complete the house. The vote was unanimous. It was also "voted to build in partnership with the township and build for township and school purpose." Two third voted in favor of building on a new site. It was "voted to appoint a committee to confer with a committee the township has appointed for the purpose."

At the annual meeting of the board on September 27, 1852 it was "voted to have eight and a half months of school during the year." Board to decide lengths of time taught in summer and winter.

A special meeting of the taxable inhabitants was held at the school house on February 14, 1853 at 6 O'clock P.M. "for the purpose of taking into consideration the adopting of outline maps into the school and raising money to purchase the same." \$9.00 were appropriated by a property tax to pay for the maps. There was only one negative vote.

At the Annual Meeting of the board held September 20, 1853 it was "voted that the district board finish the school house and build the privies on or before November 15, 1853, to have four months winter and five months summer school & to apply two thirds of the public money to the winter school and the balance to the summer school."

The board reported "the sale of the old School House of the district by private sale for Ten Dollars." The board also reported "that the township has allowed the district Twenty five dollars for the use of the old school house for township purpose."

At the annual meeting held at the school house September 25, 1854 it was "voted to have three months winter school or 3 ½ months as the majority of the officers may think proper. Voted that the directors set the furnishing of fire wood for the use of the school for the ensuing year to the lowest bidder and that cost of the same be collected off those that send scholars by a rate bill."

In general it may be said that during these early years the winter term varied from three to four months in the winter and from three to five months in the summer. A male teacher was employed for the winter months and a female teacher for the summer months. Excerpts from the Official Record Book of Mr. John Fiegel

A Special meeting of the district was held May 15, 1855 at the school house when it was voted to build a wood house and two privies under the same roof of said wood house. It was voted to raise ninety dollars on the taxable property for said wood house.

At a special meeting of the qualified voters of the district held at the school house October 29, 1856 it was decided to raise by tax "the sum of twenty dollars to procure a table and desk for the teacher and suitable fixtures to the school house for the convenience of the scholars attending school and to enlarge the painted surface used as a blackboard and to pay incidental expenses of the current year."

At the Annual Meeting held at the school house September 28, 1857 it was resolved to have 3 months school by a male teacher in winter term and four months in summer term by a female teacher. Voted to apply the mill Tax money of 1857 to the winter school and the Primary School money to the summer school voted, to furnish 10 cords of good stove wood 30 inches long by rate bill. Voted, to procure a copy of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language in compliance with act No. 175 of the Legislature of Mich. Passed at the regular session of 1857."

In the report of the board for the year ending September 27, 1858 we find the following items:

Rec'd of mil tax money \$52.18

Rec'd of State funds \$23.00

Collected on the rate bill

To pay teacher of winter Term \$27.86

At the Annual meeting of September 9, 1861 it was "voted to raise two dollars to clean the school house twice during the year and three dollars to pay the director for his services."

At the Annual meeting of September 1, 1862 it was "voted to have a female teacher for Winter School."

In the Annual report for August 30, 1863 we find these words; "in compliance with the requirements of the law," The board reported there had been "Six months and a half school kept during the year." The two mill Tax was appropriated to pay for the Winter School

On September 7, 1863 at the Annual Meeting it was voted to have five months Winter School by a man teacher, to have no Summer School and to pay the director five dollars for his services. The report of the board states there was five and three fourths months of school taught during the year for which there was paid the sum of \$65.50. It was voted to have school during the summer.

At the Annual Meeting held September 4, 1865 it was voted to have a male teacher for the winter term and a female teacher for the summer term and to have a free school for two months in winter and one in summer term. It was also voted to have three months school in the winter and three or four months in the summer. The wood was to be paid for by a Rate Bill on the parents of the scholars attending the winter term.

At the Annual Meeting held on September 7, 1868 it was "voted to have no school during the ensuing year." No reason for this is stated in the minutes.

Under "Receipts and Expenditures for 1869 & 70" we find, "Cash paid Mary Hebage, teacher \$58.50." It is not stated how many months she taught to earn this amount but it was probably a summer term.

At the Annual Meeting held September 15, 1870 it was "voted (1) to have a female teacher during the whole term school is kept, (2) to continue the school as long as the Mill Taxes and Public monies will pay after deducting the cost of wood and other requisites."

At the Annual Meeting held Sept 4, 1871 it was "voted to have five month's school during the coming year, and to have a female teacher."

Twenty names are listed for the census return of the district in September 1872.

At the Annual Meeting held September 2, 1872 it was 'voted (1) to have 5 month's school during the coming year: 2 months in fall and 3 months in summer (2) to have a female teacher during the whole time school is kept (3) to allow John Feigle \$10.00 for two cords of wood furnished ready for the stove." The job to shingle one half of the School house was let to Mr. Feigle for \$35.

Twenty-three names are listed for the Census return of the district in September 1873.

Among the expenditures for 1872-73 we find that \$51.80 was paid for the fall school and \$54.00 for the summer school. The director's salary was \$5.00

At the Annual Meeting held September 1, 1873 it was "voted (1) to have 3 months winter school by a female teacher (2) to have 2 months summer school by a female teacher (3) to have teacher board around in the district but the vote was reconsidered by division of the house (4) the Director be not allowed to pay more than \$7 a week for teacher (5) to raise by tax \$35 to carry on school (6) to raise by tax \$25 for wood and the other incidental expenses.

Among the expenses for 1877-78 we find that Anna P. Preston, teacher, fall term received \$60. Emily Phillips was paid \$70 for teaching services.

At the Annual Meeting on September 2, 1878 it was "voted (1) to have 8 months school during the year, four months winter and four months summer school (2) to have the school board determine whether they shall have a male or female teacher (3) school to commence about November first and April first respectively."

Among the expenditures for 1878-79 Frank Rathfron received \$90 for the winter term, Emily Suddaby \$56 for the summer term.

At the Annual Meeting held September 1, 1879 it was voted (1) to have 8 months school during the year by a female teacher. (2) to have fall school to commence September 22.

On May 21, 1880, members of the school board of School District #3 Township of Pittsfield met to adopt the following Uniform list of text books: Sanders Readers, and Spellers, Robinsons Arithmetic, Ecelectic Geography, Harveys Grammer, Barnes History, and Spencerian Copybook.

According to the Expense for 1880-81 Nettie Rundell was paid \$40 for teaching the fall term.

In the receipts for 1879 and several times thereafter we noticed that Dog Tax money was listed among other items.

Among the expenditures for 1881-82 we find the following teachers with the amounts they received: Etta F. Baker, \$40; Anna S. Page \$56; Effie M. Reynolds \$40.

In 1882-83 Sarah Jewell was paid \$40 for teaching; Eugene John was paid \$45 for teaching and Nettie Evans was paid \$56 for teaching.

On November 21, 1882 members of the school board met to adopt the following list of books in accordance with the provisions of the school law: Sanders new graded readers, Sanders Spellers, Robinsons Arithmetic, Harveys Grammers, Eclectic Geography, Barnes History, Spencerian Copy Books, Townsends Civil Governments, Webster School Dictionary.

At the Annual Meeting of 1883 it was voted to have 8 months school. 2 months fall, 3 months winter and 3 months spring with a female teacher for the school year.

In the expenditures for 1883 Lottie Millard was paid \$60 for teaching and Hattie E. Coonley was paid \$42. Charlotte L. Millard, \$90.

At the Annual Meeting in 1884 a motion was made and carried to have 9 months of school with a female teacher. There school term consisted of five months fall and winter and four months spring.

In the expenditures for 1884-85 Nettie Evans was paid \$56 for teaching and Mary A. Huddy \$196.

The first reference, as far as we have noticed, of insurance is at the annual meeting of September 6, 1886 when it was decided to raise \$12 to insure the school house.

Among the expenditures for 1886-7 Emma J. McMullen was paid \$170 for teaching, Maggie Pease received \$40 for teaching, Burleigh Bakeman was paid \$3.50 for building fires and O. L. Matthew \$12 for insurance of school.

At a meeting held February 1, 1889 the school Board adopted for uniform use in accordance with School Law the following: Harpers New Readers, Harpers Copy Books and Harpers Spelling Blanks.

Among the expenses for the 1888-89 Nona Bird was paid \$55 for teaching the spring term of 2 months, Addie Crittenden received \$120 and Nellie B. Avery \$55.

At the Annual Meeting held September 2, 1889 the board voted against the use of free text books. It voted to raise \$12 to insure the school house for \$900 for the ensuing 3 years. It was also voted that J. Fiegel haul 6 loads gravel to make gravel walk at \$.45 per yard.

Among the expenditures for 1890 Hattie Walker was paid \$54 for teaching Frank Harwood was paid \$3.90 for building fires. John Jedele was paid \$28 for building 2 privies.

Among the expenditures for 1891 Julia Schuman was paid \$112 for teaching and Anna Chalmers was paid \$55.

The following items taken from "School Expenditures for the years 1891-2" will be of interest: 12 blank teachers contracts \$.15, a box of matches \$.03, Leona Markham teaching full fall term \$62.50, broom \$.35, box of crayons \$.25, Lillian Crippen teaching winter term \$112.00, John Geddes building fires \$3.75 wood \$23.30, directors salary \$5.00, pail and dust pan \$.27, John Fiegel wood and kindling \$6.50 repairs on school house \$2.00 Lillian Crippen teaching spring term \$60.25.

Receipts for 1891-2 were as follows Balance on hand September 7, 1891-\$22.42; Primary School interest fund, Library and dog tax \$32.15.

Among the expenditures for 1892-93 we find: Register \$.50 broom \$.35 Crayons \$.25, painting blackboard \$1.50, plastering \$.50, Insurance \$.50, work on school yard \$1.00, box of crayons \$.20 Mary Blackburn teaching \$50.00, W. Dictionary \$9.25, Sophia East teaching \$112.00, John Geddes building fires, \$4.00, S. S. Morgan for wood \$22.00, John Cubitt cleaning house \$2.00, Director's salary \$5.00 Anna Chalmers teaching \$62.50, Broom \$.25.

The receipts for the year of 1892-93 are as follows. Amount on hand September 1, 1892 - \$36.03, Primary School interest fund \$26.55, Mill tax \$76.15 Voted the Surplus Dog tax \$4.66.

At the Annual Meeting in 1893 it was voted to have nine months school consisting of three months each - fall, winter, spring.

The expenditures for 1893-94 indicate that \$75 was paid for the fall and spring terms and that \$80 was paid for the winter term.

Family names represented in the Census for District #3, Pittsfield Township, Washtenaw County, State of Michigan between 1854 and 1894 are: Morgan, Marriott, Potts, Geddes, Pritchard, Aiken, Harwood, Smith, Farnell, Wallace, Corselius, Fairchilds, Lovejoy, Tyler, Platt, Lewis, Osler, Shaw, Shan, Seigneur, Slight, Brownell, Lenbitt, Phillips, Briggs, Sollit, Lytle, Herbage, Murphy, Clark, King, Loomis, Biglow, Suddaby, Bond, McConnel, Roach, Semson, Ruch, Welch, Armstrong, Jadley, Forsyth, Picketts, Rochett, Simpson, Slater, Rennie, Read, Regeitz, Shooter, Webb, Lutz, Bateman, Bookaw, Yeadely (Jedele?) Reed, Robinson, Sumner, Standbridge, Smurthwaite, Monk, McGonigle.

The directors of the district for this period of 1854-1894 were J. K. Wallace 1855, Samuel A. Morgan 1856, Isaac Farnall 1858, J. K. Wallace 1859, E. L. Aiken 1860, John Fiegel 1867, Thomas Smurthwaite



1872, Edward S. J. Smith 1875, Thomas Smurthwaite 1878, Wm. Geddes, Clerk 1883, John Harwood 1885, Wm Geddes Clerk, 1886, Robert Geddes, Director 1887, Wm Geddes clerk, 1893.

The following figures are taken from the census lists in the official record book from 1854-1894:

(Between 4 and 18 years) 50 in 1854, 41 in 1855, 41 in 1856, 46 in 1857, 47 in 1858, 40 in 1859, 43 in 1860.

(Between 5 and 20 years) 43 in 1861, 36 in 1862, 37 in 1863, 37 in 1864, 38 in 1865, 28 in 1866, 24 in 1867, 12 in 1868, 16 in 1869, 22 in 1870, 17 in 1871, 20 in 1872, 20 in 1873, 20 in 1874, 20 in 1875, 26 in 1876, 34 in 1877, 36 in 1878, 41 in 1879.

(Between 5 and 25) 40 in 1880

(Between 5 and 20 years) 41 in 1881, 43 in 1882, 47 in 1883, 43 in 1884, 45 in 1885, 49 in 1886, 38 in 1887, 38 in 1888, 41 in 1889, 37 in 1890, 37 in 1891, 45 in 1892, 41 in 1893.

Mr. John Feigle, Director of the school board and who has served in that capacity for the past fifty years was listed as five years of age in the school census for the year 1873. This information can be found in the official record book from 1854-1894 which Mr. Feigle has in his possession.

We have learned, through information furnished by a son and a daughter that the wife of the late Dr. Joseph B. Steere was a teacher during the spring term of three months during the time the present director, Mr. John Feigle and his sisters were enrolled as pupils in this school. We were told that she rode on horseback out State Street to reach the school from her home in Ann Arbor.

Enrollment for 1940-41

Grade, Name, Age, Special notes

8, Moran, Elmer, 12

8, Nalepka, Edward, 15

7, Enkeman, Louis, 13, Left 10/28/40

7, Winkle, Delight, 12

6, Canter, William, 12

6, Humphrey, Fred, 11

6, Jones, Herbert, 13

6, Moran, Robert, 11

6, Nordman, Elaine 12

5, Jones, Alice, 11

4, Humphrey, Robert, 9

4, Nalepka, Josephine, 11

3, Heaton, Joan, 9

3, Humphrey, William, 8

3, Jones, Eva, 10

3, Robertson, Paul, 9, trans. From Winter Haven, Florida 4/28/41; left 5/27/41

3, Settles, Phillip, 8, Left 1/31/41

2, Heaton, Roger, 8

2, Nalepka, Eleanor, 9

2, Richardson, David, 7, Left 2/17/41  
1, Jones, Erma, 7  
1, Nalepka, Walter, 7  
1, Nordman, Douglas, 6  
1, Weinert, Hermine, 6  
B, McCalla, Francis, 5, Left 3/2/41  
B, Gleason, James, 5, trans. From Forbes, 4/18/41  
B, Richardson, Phillip, 6, Left 2/17/41  
B, Settles, Delores, 6, Left 1/31/41  
B, Weinert, Margaret, 5

Teachers 1940-41

Dorothy McIntee 8 Weeks  
Mrs. Mary F. McClain 8 Weeks  
Mrs. Charlotte Franz Wilcox 20 Weeks with  
Mrs. Madeline Pohnert substituting 1 week for Mrs. Wilcox

*Source: Pittsfield Township records, box 1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. This entry is from a history of Washtenaw County Schools written by students in the schools and loaned to the Bentley Historical Library by Julius W. Haab, County Superintendent, August 1943. It has been edited slightly for inclusion on the Pittsfield Township Historical Society Website.*