

1873 ~ 1981

S.S. No. 12

POINT
ABINO
SCHOOL

School Section Number 12 - now known as Point Abino Public School

Researched and written by Margaret E. Teal

To trace the history of the one room schoolhouse built in 1873 is to go back in time to another era - a time of growing for a community founded by United Empire Loyalists, who had travelled a long and difficult path through the wilderness from Pennsylvania. Dubbed Pennsylvania Dutch, their origin in Europe could have been German, or Swiss, or French, or English. Of the mennonite faith for the most part, they fled before the persecution of the American Revolution - preferring the hardship of a wilderness life, to the harrassment and persecution inflicted upon all citizens loyal to England, or whose faith precluded the taking up of arms.

In the late 1700's they came with their conestoga wagons and livestock making their way along the ancient Indian Trail, known later as Limestone Ridge. The highest ridge of land-this trail was used as a portage by the Indians between the Niagara River, near Millers Creek, and Point Abino Bay on Lake Erie.

Here they joined other families of Scotch and Irish and English descent, taking up farms mostly along the high land of the Ridge. In the early days before Bertie became a municipality the whole area along the lakeshore and extending many miles inland, including what later became the village of Ridgeway and Crystal Beach, was known as Point Abino. Named for a Father Claude Aveneau who lived on the point where the land juts out into Lake Erie, and on the surrounding sandhills, sometime about 1690, it was always marked on maps after this visit as the beauty and tranquility of this spot, the French Jesuit Priest spent a time of solitude and worship, in preparation for missionary work among the Miami Indians. Later on it became quite a flourishing industrial area on the waterfront - but during the early days it was a quiet, place with scattered dwellings, built for the most part along the shoreline and the limestone ridge, with a church built along the ridge, a post office and R. R. station in what was later called the village of Ridgeway.

According to Harlow Day whose Grandfather took up land near the location of the present school site-survival in the early days was of prime importance and there was little time for education. From an early age children were taught to work hard, helping with seeding and harvesting, and all the varied tasks of exacting a living off the land. If there was time they were taught to write their name and to read the Bible, but many could only read or write or speak in German. The few who could read and write English taught the others. Mr. Day related how his Grandmother used to tell him stories of the pioneer days when he was a young boy and how he often sat at her feet listening to the exciting tales.

As things became settled and families were growing - an attempt was made to have regular school, but only in the wintertime when work on the farm was slack. When children were later required to go to school by law, all day- and for most of the year- a terrible outcry was made by the parents.

The present school was constructed in 1873 of limestone hewn from the quarries at Windmill Point, another neighbouring and thriving area in the early years. No one seems to know for sure, but the stone was probably laid by the Edsall Brothers who built the Windmill Point School, the Windmill Point Church and the Bertie Townhall in Ridgeway. The good condition of these buildings attest to the skill and knowledge of the builders. All were constructed along the same lines with tall cathedral windows with stone arches, and a classical entrance with double doors and window above, framed in stone. Above the entrance and beneath the roof the name of the building and the date was carved.

The building consisted of one room with clothes closets on either side of the entrance. The teacher prepared and taught eight classes within the one room. Students often accelerated two or three classes in a year and were ready for entrance by age eleven. Bright students were encouraged to go on and were never held back, as is the custom at the present time. Students could not attend normal school until age 16 and many began teaching when they were 16 - putting in the time until they could go to Normal School, learning on the job, and no doubt filling a vacancy, for many teachers stayed only one or two years, or if they were homesick, as in some cases, a few months.

It is not clear whether land for the new school was given by James Haun or was acquired from William and Margaret Barney on July 29th 1873. Trustees at the time were Washington Sloan, Walter E. Ellsworth and William Schooley. Additional land was bought in 1911 from John and Ann Caroline McLeod. The trustees at this time were Nathan Day, George Wintemute and John H. Sherk. Additional land was purchased at a later date from a Mrs. E. Miller making total amount of school property two acres. The trustees at this time were: G. W. McIntosh, Earl Winger, Fred Crown, and N. Day, Sec.-Treas. The school was heated by a large box stove - and the woodshed was built next to the line fence. Tenders were advertised for wood- and on Jan. 2, 1902 tenders were received - Frank Sherk being the lowest was accepted for 15 cords of 30" length at \$1.85 per cord delivered to the school yard by Mar. 7th.

A pump was located next to the line fence, also, according to Mrs. Lloyd Chambers (nee Near) with a pail and dipper, from which everyone drank. Evidently wandering stock at times came and partook of the water at the well also - and the matter was brought up at one meeting as to how best to deal with this problem. In the record book from 1891 to 1929 we find that the area about the well was given a cement cover - from the minutes of January 8th, 1908 - it was also decided to put a concrete platform in front of the schoolhouse and to place a flagpole on the school. In December of this same year it was moved by John M. Sherk, seconded by John H. Sherk that trustees have a bell placed on the school. In the expenditures for 1909 we find the bell cost \$18.85, including .10¢ for money order. In the report we also find payment to Michael Sherk for Belfry and plank for bridge (in front of school) \$52.06. Melvin Foreman and A.H. Snrigley signed as Auditors.

In the early days of the school a meeting was held usually once a year, and followed the same format from year to year. This consisted of the appointing of a chairman, then a secretary-and hearing reports from the trustees and the auditors, followed by appointment of a new trustee and auditor for the coming year.

Through the years changes have been made to the original building. In 1949 we find the board exchanging the former old outdoor privies, which as one former pupil relates are equiped with three holes and one small one- an old catalogue, for indoor washrooms.

At this time also, a second teacher was hired, and the room divided to accommodate the two classes. Mrs. Wm. Athoe was the teacher at the time and Mrs. C. Webster was hired as her assistant. At this time Harold Morley was chairman and Mrs. V. S. Jansen, Secretary. Other members were announced that J. O. Page, E. Michael and Phil Cooper. At a meeting in 1947 it was announced that our school had won fifth prize in Welland County for beautification of school grounds. In this year also, on motion by Earl Michael, seconded by H. Morley that Mrs. McCauley's salary be increased to \$90.00. Mrs. McCauley was the music teacher for this and other schools in the Township, and gave much of her time and energy to music appreciation and the art of Keeping in tune, to the various classes. In 1893, the municipal assessment was \$12.47 and Legislative grant was \$16.47 and the teacher was paid \$300.00, divided into quarterly payments. On Sept. 20, 1896, Ed Schooley was paid .20 for two weeks of sweeping the school. In 1898 we find renewal of insurance on schoolhouse - \$1.00 crayons and a broom .45 and janitor duties \$3.00 per quarter. In the minutes for Jan. 4th, 1905 after discussing for some time the best course to take to have the parents send their children to school more regular it was decided to appoint a Truant Officer. On motion by A. Carver, seconded by J. M. Sherk that E. Michael be Truant Officer. The school was nearly lost one time. It seems the caretaker (sometimes an older student) left the box used as a waste basket during the day on the floor-inside the front door when leaving. The next morning the teacher found a small pile of ashes. Due to lack of oxygen it was felt the box had slowly burned itself out. Needless to say the cardboard box emptied into the incinerator at the back of the school. Additions and changes were made to the school house through the years. All through the years the school boards carried out their responsibilities and it was with some sadness that these individual boards, by act of parliament were dissolved in 1955- and one board for Bertie Township formed. With the change to Regional Government in 1969 and the dissolution of the Township - The Niagara South Board of Education was formed - which Board will now close this, and other smaller schools - to the dismay of the residents who cherish sweet memories of happy days in the little one room stone schoolhouse -

which it is hoped will be restored to its simple charm, and remain a reminder to future generations of an era now passing.

In 1964, former Trustees and teachers were honoured at a dinner by the Parent-Teacher's Club. This group of parents have been very active through the years since it was formed in 1959. This group was formed as a concerned group of parents and neighbours working together for the welfare of the children.

Evidently from the old records available, guests were welcomed at the school and were asked to sign a visitor's book. The following are some of the visitors, from Jan. 16th 1873 - June 18th, 1913, and is titled Entries from Old Trustees Record Book, also used as a visitor's book. These were copied by this writer in 1967 - and are especially dear to me as I found that my Grandmother Mrs. John Adams and her two daughters, Miss Mary Jane Adams and Miss Margaret E. Adams had also signed the book. From speaking with former pupils and reading the old records one can feel the friendliness of the community which seems to have centered around the school - and I know that my mother always spoke with such affection of her home at Point Abino and her school mates.

The present staff are as follows: Principal - Gary J. Lavallee, Teachers - Mrs. Elaine Moore, Mrs. Shirley-Ann Teal, Mrs. Faye Bean, Mrs. Joan DeYoung, Mr. Lorne Ruegg and Mrs. Carolyn Climenhaga, School Secretary.

A record of teachers and trustees was prepared by Mrs. Eleanor Woods from 1892 - 1968. We would like to pay tribute to the teachers who preceded them but unfortunately records are not available. In the oldest book, now available dated 1891 - 1929 we read on the flyleaf - continuation of the Secretary Book for S. S. No. 12 in the Township of Bertie in the year 1844.

Prior to the building of the stone schoolhouse there was a log school across the road on Schoolay property, later Shrigleys. It was always in what was known as the sugarbush, due to the tall maple trees that were tapped every spring. Elnora Miller (nee Stickles) talked of going to school at No. 12, and that there was an old church across the road, called Shrigleys Church. She told of walking down the Point Abino road - which was just a trail running out to the lake, with the Adams children and the Pages.

Some feel that the school was also used for Church services and was built before 1800 - soon after settlers moved into the area following the American Revolution. It is believed that this school and Church were built on Clergy Reserve - a law that stated that one seventh of surveyed area or section must be reserved for a Church of England, the only recognized Church in the early days and the only Church allowed to perform marriages. Often the school was under the direction of the Church. Parents worked together - giving the teacher room and board, rotating from family to family, and sharing the salary. School would be open from snowfall to early spring for everyone old enough had to help with the work at home.

When Egerton Ryerson in 1840 organized the schools in Ontario, taxes were levied for education and grants were given but salaries for teachers were very small - about \$260.00 per annum.

Some say that there was a log Church facing south on the triangle of property where later Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Chambers had a store, and next to it a log school with a drilled well and pump between. Mrs. Chambers said the pump still there when they took over the land and they put in a pumphouse over it.

This log school was replaced by a frame school just east - about where Coopers nursery stands - between the two Schooley farms. This school was open until the new stone school was built in 1873. Mrs. Evan Sabs (nee Sherk) says her Grandfather Christian Sherk attended the old log school and her father Martin Sherk attended the frame school. When it was time for the pupils to move into the new school across the road - her father Martin said, "We picked up our slate and slate pencil and books and carried them up the road." The best spellers in 1870-80 were Addie Sherk Morgan and Elliott. Mrs. Sabs father was presented with a certificate - nicely printed on a white card with a fancy green border which read - presented to Martin Sherk as an honourable testimony of approbation for industry, punctuality and good conduct.

Teacher Mary Jane Page

Miss Page was born at Point Abino and taught sometime prior to 1891. She is the Grandmother of Miss Mildred Mathewson and former Alderman, Earl Beam.

She married Willson Bowen and moved to the old stone farmhouse at Split Rock. Her daughter, Miss Gertrude Bowen taught at No. 12 from 1892 - 1894. A son, Ernest taught at S. S. No. 10 - and at S. S. No. 13. Other teachers prior to 1891 were Miss Kate Heibling (Mrs. Ostertag) and Miss Alfreda Briethaupt, (Mrs. Barnhart), and a Mr. Mathews. Miss Page always told of how when on June 2nd, 1866, word came that the Fenians were coming, they were told to send the children home. Albert W. Reavely taught during 1910. Ken Ellsworth says he licked 9 boys the first day. He was a military man - and fought in the Fenian Raids, later writing an article on his personal experiences, for Welland County Historical Society papers and records.

Eric Sherk was a respected and well loved teacher. One teacher came one day and quit the next day. Mrs. Joseph Bitner (nee Mary Benner) remembers going across the road to eat their lunch and play and visit Mrs. Shrigley as she sat on her front porch smoking her pipe. This house was later sold to Ed. Reeb who remodelled it, and is now the McIntosh property.

The late Alvin Benner, Mrs. Bitner's brother went to school at No. 12 and then while waiting to go to Normal School or model school which preceded normal. As a young man he went out west on the Harvest Excursion. After the harvest he found a job as teacher in a small town of Burdett - north of Calgary. It was very cold and everyone came by horseback or sleigh to the one room school. Alvin, Mary and all their brothers and sisters attended school at one time. Mr. Benner taught at Port Colborne for 40 yrs. after his experience out west.

Arbour Day in May was the highlight of the year according to Mrs. Chas. Coulthurst (nee Ruth Adams). Right after nine o'clock the whole school, even the youngest would walk to the lake and one or two pupils always managed to fall in, trying to walk a pipe jutting out from the shore. They had lunch, were shown through the lighthouse, built in 1917, by Keeper, Gordie Haun and later Pat Augustine, and played on the Abino Sandhills. She said the hills were fascinating and her father, Joseph Adams would tell them stories of happenings up in the hills, such as when he shot a bear

and its ghost still haunted the area. The Pages used to come in the evenings to hear the stories.

SUCH ARE THE SWEET MEMORIES OF YESTERYEAR

Entries from old Trustee's Record Book,
also used as a visitor's book.

Public School, Section #12

Jan. 16, 1873

Visited School today and am well pleased, the order and progress of scholars are fine, pupils present 12.

Nathan Day

May 30, 1873

Geo. H. Voss, Buffalo

Miss May Edsall

Miss E. C. Dunston

Iva Fontanelle

Miss M. J. Adams

June 22, 1893

Visited this school today - 22 pupils present, found the pupils under good discipline and attentive. The floor of the School Room is clean, but the walls and ceilings need a coat of alabastine, of gray tint. The equipments previously referred to are still to be provided.

signed Jas. H. Hall
County Inspector

Visited the school today. Full attendance. Found neat work, and everything in good condition.

C. H. Riselay
Buffalo, N. Y.

Visitors or guests:

Mrs. John Cunneen, Buffalo, N. Y.

Mrs. C. J. Bass, Buffalo

Lottie E. Cunneen

Lora B. Smith - Buffalo

Mary J. Adams - Bertie

Jeannette Voss, Buffalo

Oct. 24, 1898

Miss Annie Smith - Bertie

Miss Stella Sherk - Sherkston

George Book, Buffalo, N. Y.

June 20, 1899

Mrs. Maude Emerson - Attercliffe, Ont.

Oct. 1899

Miss Maggie Adams

Miss Edna Rose

Miss May Rose

Dec. 1899

Mar. 1900

Mrs. J. Adams

Mr. B. Snider

Miss Mary Adams

Oct. 1900

Laura Rose

Lottie Michael

Johnny Bearress

May 13th, 1901

Miss Bothman

Mrs. Rose

Mrs. Schooley

Mr. N. Y. Shisler

Aug. 30, 1901

Mr. B. Snider

Oct. 17, 1902 - visited the school, Miss May Edsall

Oct. 17, 1902 - Compliments of Mrs. Eiman Michael, Bertie
Master Earl Michael

April 29, 1903

Miss Ailsa May Edsall, Ridgeway

Nora M. Clarke, Ridgeway

Maude B. Lindsay, Ridgeway

Florence E. Sherk, Ridgeway

June 11, 1906

Visited the school today - on the roll this time 57,
present today 33. I am well pleased to find the school doing
well and the pupils orderly and attentive to their studies.

Jas. H. Hall
County Inspector

Oct. 14, 1908

Miss Anna Zavitz is now in charge of the school and we
look for an improvement particularly in the work of the 4th
class. There are 49 names enrolled - and 38 present today.
The attendance of some pupils is wretchedly irregular. For
example two pupils have each attended parts of the nine weeks
since vacation but only one full week each. The average for
August was $34 \frac{1}{2}$, for Sept. $27 \frac{1}{4}$.

Miss Zavitz did good work in her former school and you
have made a good selection in her appointment.

J. W. Marshall
County Inspector

Dec. 18, 1908

Mrs. T. A. Medlar
 Miss Jessie Davison, Bertie Ontario
 Nathan Day, April 30, 1909
 George Wintermute, April 30, 1909

April 12, 1910

Present today 35, on the roll 50. The section is fortunate in having Mr. A. W. Reavley, B.A. as Principal of the school. Excellent work is being done even in the subjects of part I which are too often neglected elsewhere. I am pleased to find new desks throughout, also a new map of the Dominion of Canada. A marked improvement is also noticeable in the condition of the outbuildings due largely to the fact that the teacher keeps daily supervision of them.

J. W. Marshall
 County Inspector

Bruce S. Gorham
 Elsie H. Newman, Herkimer, N. Y.
 Mrs. Wm. W. Meek, Buffalo, N. Y.

Aug. 24, 1910

Only 28 present today. Those names below have not as yet returned for the new term which began on the 15 Inst. - The delinquents in this respect are:

Mary Baer	- aged 9	Minnie Baer	- aged 12
Lillie Baer	" 11	Frank Wintermute	" 11
Myra Jackson	" 12	Ken Ellsworth	" 8
Hazel Wintermute	" 12	Elizabeth Foreman	" 7

Earl Medlar and Blanche Michael. The new teacher Miss Florence A. Meek seems to be making a good beginning.

J. W. Marshall
 County Insp.

Muriel Thom - Sept. 5/11

Lillian Wintemute, Sherkston

Nov. 22/11

Oct. 24, 1912

Thirty five pupils present - 52 names on roll - average has been 39 1/2. Ernest Bowen, a recent graduate of Ridgeway Cont. School and Hamilton Normal is in charge as teacher and is doing good work.

Mr. Marshall,
School Inspector

Wilfred S. Sherk - Sherkston

June 18, 1913

Harlow Day, June 23, 1913

Gladys Medlar June 23, 1913

FORMER TEACHERS

1892-Miss Gertrude Bowen
1894-Miss North
1895-Miss Bray
1896-C. I. Hayes
1897-Miss Ingeman
1898-Miss Helen Rose
1902-Mr. E. L. Sherk
1903-Miss Mae McClelland
1908-Miss Zavitz
1909-Miss McGovern
1910-Mr. A. W. Reaveley
 Miss Meek
1912-Miss McQueen
 Miss Schneuker
1913-Miss Fletcher
1914-Mr. Alvin Benner
1916-Miss Elsley
1918-Miss Creed
 Miss Marjorie Inman
1922-Miss Sloan
1926-Miss McKelvey
 (Mrs. E. Michael)
1927-Miss Viola Cotton
1929-Miss Brown (Mrs. Davis)
1933-Miss Gertrude Briggs
 (Mrs. Jack Lichtenberger)
1938-Miss Dorothy Sherk
1939-Mr. Aldon Hasty
1942-Mrs. Lillian Athoe
1943-Miss Mitchel (Mrs. Hill)
1945-Mrs. Lillian Athoe
1952-Mrs. Stella Engles
1953-Mr. Thomas Toesh
1954-Miss Jean Johnson
1956-Miss Charlotte Dix
1958-Mrs. Vera Wilson
1961-Mrs. Marjorie Lewis
 Mrs. Lenore Ellsworth
 (temporary)
1962-Mrs. M. Lewis
 Miss Evelyn Leslie
 Miss M. Lamorie
1963-Mrs. M. Lewis
 Miss Evelyn Leslie
1964-Mrs. M. Lewis
 Mr. Douglas Taylor
1965-Mr. Douglas Taylor
 Mr. Trevor Climenhage
 Miss A. Kromkamp
1966-Mr. D. Taylor
 Miss Carol House
 Mr. T. Climenhage
 Miss Kromkamp

Teachers from 67 - 77

	<u>Grade 1-2</u>	<u>Grade 3-4</u>	<u>Grade 5-6</u>
76/77	Claire Webster	Mrs. Bunny Bremner	Bruce Wolfe
75/76	" "	Miss Gail Spear	" "
74/75	" "	Lorna Huber	" "
73/74	" "	" "	" "
72/73	" "	" "	Doug Taylor
71/72	" "	" "	" "
70/71	" "	" "	" "
69/70	" "	" "	" "
68/69	" "	" "	" "
67/68	" "	Mrs. Lorna Allen (Jan.-June) Mrs. Alida Osborne (Sept.-Dec.)	" "

Gary Lavallee 1977/81
 Shirley-Ann Teal 1977/81
 Claire Webster til 1980
 Lorne Ruegg 1980/81
 Faye Bean 1977/78 - 80/81
 Bruce Green 1978/79
 Elaine Moore 1979/81