



Township of Melancthon
Heritage Advisory Committee
One Room Schoolhouse Project
S.S. #1
Silks School
By: Member Kristine Pedicone



Background

SS#1 was the first school to be built in the Township of Melancthon in or around 1863. This school is at the corner of 3rd line and 5 sideroad Melancthon. The original school was a log school. The land was donated by Henry Silk (hence the name Silks School). The school was built 20 years before Dufferin became a County, at the time it was considered Grey County. There was also no school in Shelburne so the students from Shelburne came to this school for their education walking 2 miles. In the winter months many of the younger children did not attend.

Mr. Halship was the first teacher and he built wooden benches with no backs for the students to sit on.

In 1924 the present brick schoolhouse was built at a cost of \$5000. Payments were made of \$500 per year and the school was paid off in 1934. The contractor was Mr. J. Hughson who resided in Horning's Mills. (This makes this school 100 years old in 2024)

The school housed grades 1 to 8. With one teacher presiding over classes each day.

School was always opened with the Lord's prayer and the singing of God Save the King/Queen. The Queen's picture was at the front of the classroom.

The names of some of the teachers who taught at this school are: Dora Clark, Betty Ann Livingston, Richard Iler (spelling), Mrs. Lloyd, Eve Coe, Anna Kendrew, Leta Prior, George Wallace, Joan Woods, Gladys Henry, Wilena Flear.

Bert Silk was a caretaker for many years.

Downstairs to the left was a playroom and to the right was the furnace and cold storage. On the west side of the building were the blackboards and a step-up platform for the teacher. On the northside was a small library, and Cloakrooms were at the back of the class on the East side.

There was a travelling library in later years that would visit the school.

Lloyd Thompson would deliver supplies to the schools.



Year Taken Unknown

Some of the Favorite Memories from Students Who Attended S.S #1:

Games such as Red light Green light, Simon Says, Baseball. Preparing for Christmas concerts. There was a large heating register at the front of the classroom where I dropped my crayons down which made the classroom very smoky. It was always fun preparing for the Christmas concert. - **G. Thompson**

We went tobogganing one winter's day. The tobogganing hill was about a mile and a half north of the school. We all walked there and tobogganed all afternoon. When it was time to go home, we were all exhausted, so we tied all the toboggans together and then tied the lead one to the back bumper of Mrs. Livingston's car and down the road we went! That would not happen today either! The next day, we had to write an essay about the outing. As a result, we all learned to spell the word "toboggan" that day. The word "liability" would be several more years in the future! - **H. Arnold**



Year Unknown

Back Row: Ernest McLean, Willis Lyon, Murray Jeffers Marie Jelly (Teacher), Harry Lyon, Frank Galbraith, Eleanor Clark, Margaret Legate

Front Row: Naomi Firth, Dennis Newman, Irma Snider, Lucy Galbraith, Leon Snider, Vivian Newman, Margaret McLean, Clinton Clark

(names and spelling unconfirmed)



1939

Back Row: Ruth Legate, Margaret Legate, Leone Snider, Dennis Newman, Marie Jelly (teacher) Harriet Spencley, Irma Snider, Lucy Galbraith, Ruth Wilson, Dalton Sawyer

Middle Row: Shirley Foster, Bernice Wilson, Bertha Legate, Laura Sawyer, Geraldine Burke, Lillian Spencley, Doreen Jeffers

Front Row: Jack Wayne ??, Doug Burke, Edith Spencley

(names and spelling unconfirmed)



Silks SS#1 1963-1964

Back Row: Mrs. Livingston, Stephen Spencley, Allan Silk, Ricky Gilard, Glenn Clarke, Glen Thompson

Middle Row: Linda Patton, Nigel Vickers, Diane Clark, Lynne Patton, Roger Ramage, Barb Patton

Front Row: John Lyons, Kevin Thompson, Andrea Montgomery, Wayne Hunter, Harold Arnold, Janet Lyons.

(names and spelling unconfirmed)

Memories from Teacher Mrs. Livingston (Heafey)

Jack Oldfield, my neighbour and local trustee, was instrumental in hiring me to teach at Silk's school in Sept. 1961. My time at Silk school was the best of my whole teaching experience.

There were always eight grades and no more than 20 pupils. What made those years of teaching so memorable was the fact that siblings of different ages were in the one room. When any of the senior pupils finished their work, they would help the younger ones. It could be with reading, doing up coats, arithmetic, helping them with their lunches or whatever was needed. Sometimes, it was just a hug.

I rarely went out to supervise in the schoolyard unless the kids begged me to come out and play with them. If there were disagreements during games, they worked it out on their own and everyone came back into the school happy.

Some Memorable Times:

- ❖ In June we would go through the Shelburne Fall Fair school entries for all grades and have those ready to submit in September. These could be printing, penmanship, essay writing, art, etc.
- ❖ The first activity in Sept. would be practicing marching and getting uniforms ready to be part of the fair parade. It was quite a chore to get everyone doing left, right at the same time.
- ❖ I vividly remember Mr. Gabel, the school inspector, coming to the door. He knocked, introduced himself and I gave him a great big hug and said, "Come on in. I am so glad to see an adult." We got along amazingly well after that.
- ❖ To make work copies for the students, they were produced on a hectograph which was a gelatin pad. You could get a maximum of three good copies. If a mouse ate one overnight, I was in trouble.
- ❖ The Christmas concert was a big event in December. We practiced plays, recitations, music with the itinerant music teacher, dances, etc. The pupils were so well-behaved that I always sat with the audience during their performance.
- ❖ I enjoyed being invited to euchre games held at different homes.
- ❖ We had Red Cross meetings and also collected money for UNICEF at Halloween for those who were in need.
- ❖ Arbor Day was a big event. There was no schoolwork that day. We cleaned and raked the yard and even painted fences when needed.
- ❖ We always had a school trip. I believe one was to Toronto and I remember touring Kellogg's in London.
- ❖ While I was at Helen Lyon's 100 birthday party, a couple of my former students told me about the time I asked them to bring toboggans for downhill fun the next day. Apparently, I did not go to the hill with them, but arrived later to tell them it was time to come back to the school. They

asked me if I remembered the Volkswagen I drove. The story is that I told them to hook the toboggans behind the car and I pulled them back to the school as they were too tired to walk. I have no recollection of that experience.

- ❖ There was no maternity leave at that time. My son Brent was born in late August, and I returned to work the 1st of October. When Sherri was born in late January, I did not return to teach. Apparently, the parents were not happy with my substitute. They offered to babysit my kids if I would come back to school to teach. Mr. Gable came to my house to tell me everything would be fine, and he would keep an eye on the school.
- ❖ At that time if I was sick just for a day or two or the roads were blocked, the school was just closed.
- ❖ On my first anniversary a grade 8 student did not come in from the yard after the noon break. No one would tell me where he was, but it finally came out that he had walked into Shelburne. Upon his return I reprimanded him, not very nicely. At the end of the day when I dismissed everyone, they all stayed in their seats. That student presented me with an anniversary card from all my pupils. Had there been a deep hole I would've been in the bottom of it.
- ❖ A box of films on various topics would be picked up from the previous school who viewed them. I wasn't informed they were ready until the morning I was to receive them, so I had to pick them up. I took one student who might've been a problem if left, with me. We picked up the box and headed back to our school, but it had started freezing raining. We got stuck between two hills and couldn't get up or down. Panic set in. We were gone approximately an hour. Upon our return. Everyone was sitting in seats working diligently. If this happened today, I guess I wouldn't have a job. When that box arrived monthly, we watched films all day and then it went on to the next school.
- ❖ The library was also a travelling box of books that would stay in the school for a month before it moved on.



SS #1 School Bell



SS#1 Water Jug

Student Harold Arnold's Recollection of his time at S.S. #1

My name is Harold Arnold, and I began attending SS#1, or Silk's School when I was six years old, in 1960. There was no kindergarten, so I started in Grade 1. Kevin Thompson and I were the only two Grade One students that year. I lived about a half mile to the east from the school on 5 Sideroad, and Kevin lived about a mile and a quarter from the school, also on 5 Sideroad. In the spring and summer, we rode bikes to school, in the winter we would walk or get a ride.

The school consisted of 8 grades at that time The teacher's name was Mrs. Lloyd—she made a fuss over me so I quite liked her. (Mrs. Lloyd was Heather and Glen Asaph's maternal grandmother). Kevin and I learned to read with Dick and Jane and Puff the Cat and Spot the dog. We counted out coloured little wood sticks and put them in bundles of ten and learned to print the alphabet. Mrs. Lloyd was no spring chicken when I had her for a teacher, and some of the Grade 8 students were good chunks of fellows and I imagine they were a fair challenge for her. Thus, at the beginning of Grade 2 or 3, I had a new teacher. Mrs. Betty Anne Livingston. She was great and very capable of keeping law and order. She also thought it was time I learned something, which took a bit of getting used to on my part, but eventually we got used to each other and I believe she came to supper one night at our farm. I don't think that would happen now.

I spent 6 years at Silk's and one year (Grade 7) at Mills' School (SS #11) (located at 4th Line O.S. Melancthon and County Road #17). Mrs. Phillips was the teacher at SS #11. After Grade 7, I went to Centennial Hylands Public School, that had been recently built, for Grade 8. I think, during my six years at Silks' school, I had about 4 or 5 different teachers, but I am not sure why we had such a high turnover. I'd say I had Mrs. Livingston the longest. I met her this summer, 2023, at a neighbour lady's 100th birthday celebration (Helen Lyons). It was a real pleasure visiting with her. I believe she was about 20 when she started there. I also believe she taught at Shrigley School a year or two before she came to Silks, perhaps under the name of Betty Anne Ruttan.

Things we did for fun: We went tobogganing one winter's day. The tobogganing hill was about a mile and a half north of the school. We all walked there and tobogganed all afternoon. When it was time to go home, we were all exhausted, so we tied all the toboggans together and then tied the lead one to the back bumper of Mrs. Livingston's car and down the road we went! That wouldn't happen today either! The next day, we had to write an essay about the outing. As a result, we all learned to spell the word "toboggan" that day. The word "liability" would be several more years in the future!

Another one of our field trips was down the 3rd Line, O.S., Melancthon, where it intersects Hwy. 10. There used to be a farmhouse that was situated in the middle of the proposed new curve at the intersection. We got to watch them jack up the house and prepare to move it. Unfortunately, the house got a very bad lean on it and things got a bit hectic around the job site. At this time, we got marched back up to the school. Another essay was required the next day. The house eventually got moved to the farm next door. It was owned by Walter Little. The laneway that used to exit for that farm, is now Susan Street, Shelburne, Ontario. I don't believe it was ever lived in again.

We usually had a bus trip every year at the end of the year. How one teacher kept track of all of us, I'll never know. There may have been some parent volunteers. We did Niagara Falls one year. I vaguely remember climbing the stairs to the top of Brock's Monument. I was at that monument this year (2023) and I cannot imagine how I ever did that! I kind of remember a trip to Toronto Island and the Science Centre as well but I'm not sure of the time frame for those.

We also used to march in the Shelburne Fair parade, getting everyone to put their left foot down at the same time on the command of LEFT was no small feat! The costumes we wore were made from burlap feed bags and would be considered politically incorrect today. We also did artwork and writing projects to be shown at the fair. After the Fair would come a Hallowe'en party, then we would start preparing for the Christmas concert. It was a big production with a stage and curtains. My classmate, Kevin, and I sang "All I want for Christmas are my two front teeth", one year as we were both missing them.

Valentine's Day was also a big deal. Everyone got a valentine. I can remember cutting them out of a sheet of valentines. We also had to rehearse for the school inspector's visit! As soon as he came into the school room we were to stand up and say "Good morning, Mr. Gable," or "Good Afternoon Mr. Gable." We were to be on our best behaviour when he was there, He would look over some of the teacher's books then he'd come and look in some of the student's books, and we all breathed a sigh of relief when he left.

We also had a music teacher that showed up once or twice a month. I remember being part of a choir at a music recital put on at the Women's Institute Hall in Honeywood. It was directed by a lady, possibly a "Mrs. Wribble"?

I think we had a Mr. Swan for a Music teacher as well. He showed up early one day at lunch hour and played ball with us. He was the pitcher for both teams. A young girl hit one of his pitches and it was a gentle pop fly right in front of him, but he made no attempt to put his glove up to catch it, so we all thought he was just going to let the girl have her run to first. However, he did have his hand and glove outstretched behind his back and he caught that fly ball to everyone's surprise!

The United Church minister showed up maybe once a month as well. Also, the Gideon's made sure we all received a copy of the New Testament. School was always opened with the Lord's prayer and the singing of God Save the Queen. The Queen's picture was at the front of the classroom, and I believe a picture of Prince Phillip as well. Grace was said at lunchtime and school was dismissed with prayer. This was mainly during Mrs. Livingston's time at Silks' school.

We also had film days. The windows had black curtains hung on them and the projector would clatter away at the back of the room. We also had Red Cross days. We would bring pennies to buy these special stamps at a penny each. Then the red-coloured stamps were placed to make a large red cross on a poster. We were too good at filling in the cross, so the ante got raised to a nickel—that slowed us up!

We once got invited up to Horning's Mills school for a ball game. I think their teacher maybe practiced with them a bit or a lot! --not so much at Silks. The final score was 50 to 1— no need for a rematch there!

I remember the kids at Conover usually made their own ice rink every winter. I believe the teacher's name was Mrs. Eva Bell. We also got great pleasure in throwing stuff at each other across the classroom when the teacher's back was turned. This practice usually ramped up when there was a substitute teacher there for the day.

Years after grade school, I had a courier job one winter between the schools in Dufferin County. At one of the schools, they asked me to wait in the teacher's lounge a few minutes while they finished getting something ready for another school on my route. In the lounge was a lady who was a substitute teacher for the day. She was pretty much in tears as she told me about a bunch of unruly kids she had been handed. I knew exactly what she was talking about, and for once felt a bit of remorse for my bad behaviour. Mrs. Dora Clark, another one of my teachers, was so good at catching us misbehaving with her back turned we believed she had mirrors in the corners of her glasses!

I witnessed the strap being applied once, and not to me, I might add. Mrs. Coe helped me practice my writing skills. Writing out lines was her idea of discipline. My father, Elwood Arnold, who was born in 1911, attended Silks school as well. He received the strap from a teacher by the name of Mrs. Pearsall. He never told me exactly what it was for, but the act of getting the strap endeared Mrs. Pearsall to him for the rest of his life. We usually visited her once a year and they'd laugh about him getting the strap on Arbour Day.