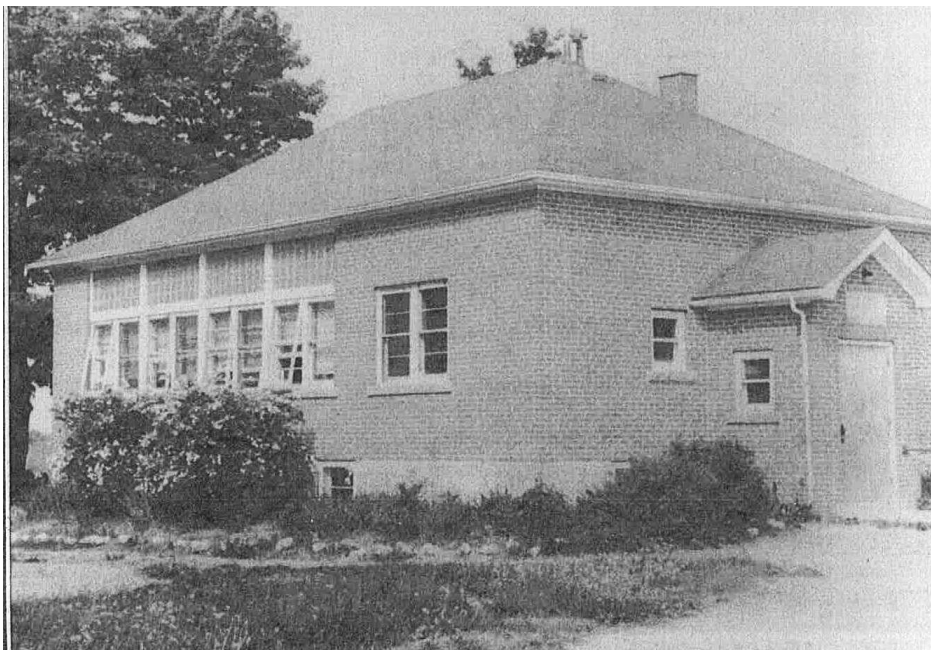




Township of Melancthon
Heritage Advisory Committee
One Room Schoolhouse Project
S.S. #7
Melancthon School
By: Member David Thwaites



Background

The Section 7 School had, perhaps, a unique place in Melancthon Township history for it was the school that provided education to the families of those who were centred about Melancthon Village, the apparent focus of the Township back in the early settlement days of the Township. Melancthon Village had become the focus by virtue of it being on the route between Orangeville and Owen Sound even prior to the railroad being built. The Village would, even in its early days in or about 1851, become the home to stores, three hotels, a blacksmith, a carpenter and post office, two churches and the school. The village would boom until the early 1900s then it gradually disappeared from the Township.

The village was located on what came to be known as Gravel Road, a precursor to Highway 10. The west side of the Village being the Front Line would find its Lots severed by the construction of the railway in 1871. The village lots extended to the west to what became, and is still, known as the Backline, otherwise properly known as 2nd Line SW.

The original settlers were largely from England, Scotland and Ireland immigrants and first-generation Canadians. The dress style was "homespun" for adults and children and the footwear was heavy coarse shoes. The diet staples were oatmeal, potatoes, flour cakes and meat.

In 1851, with the mandate for education in Canada West/Upper Canada/Ontario now law, the people of Melancthon Village and the Section that extended south to Lot 297, north to Lot 284, west to Lot 13 and east to Lot 291 NE determined to form Section School #7.

The school was originally located and constructed on Lot 287, Gravel Road. The school was apparently built on lands owned by Charles Beamish, the village blacksmith. The original construction was built of logs. It was constructed by a James Sawden. The school had dimensions of approximately 18 feet by 30 feet. The inside was painted with whitewash. The blackboards were constructed of painted wood. The student desk seats were in fact benches. The students used slate boards and pencils for writing.

At the time teachers were considered good quality as they held a Grade 3 education themselves. Teachers were expected to not only teach but also, initially, do the caretaking together with the students. The first teacher at the school was a Mr. Holdship and he would be followed by nine other teachers while in the original school.

The school attendance was dependent on the farming season, thus low in the spring and fall, but greater in the winter when the boys were not needed on the farm.

In 1881, with the formation of Dufferin County, the decision was made to relocate the school and build a brick school. Jack Taggart built the new school located on the Backline at Lot 290 SW, at the intersection of 2nd Line SW and what would in "modern" times become County Road 17. It originally consisted of one acre but would in 1921 be expanded to a two-acre parcel.

Between 1881 and 1942 there were, apparently, twenty-five teachers that provided the education for the students, almost all the teachers being single women. In 1943 the school opened without a teacher until a former teacher, Mrs. Henry, agreed to take the role. There is very little information thereafter about the school.

Archive records indicate that at least two former students of SS#7 died in World War 1 in service of country. James Fletcher Sloane, age twenty-seven, would die on March 26, 1918, in France. Thomas Allan McComb, age thirty-six, died on August 30, 1917, in France.

The notes from the school records indicate that, with the onset of World War 2, there were seven former students of SS#7 serving in the armed services and another serving with the RCMP. These servicemen included Norman Sawden, Doug McComb, Allen McComb, Irwin Ferrier, Jack Atkinson, Duncan Stewart, Harry Allen and Bob Atkinson.

In July 1946 the Grand Valley Star & Vidette newspaper reported that the Township of Melancthon had decided that Section Schools 7, 1 (Silk), 11 (Millville) and 14 (Corbetton) would as of 1947 become an Area School in an effort to consolidate resources, equalize learning opportunities and share the tax burden.

Resources referenced, included records and articles on the Museum of Dufferin website including Notes from a Teacher, 1935, (which provided much of the history), the news articles from the Grand Valley newspaper, and an article produced in the Orangeville Banner in August 1981. Reference was also made to the family ancestry records on Ancestry.ca for Charles Beamish.