

ISCHUA VALLEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FARMERSVILLE'S CHECKERED SCHOOLHOUSE

Probably one of the most famous schools in the area was known as the checkered or checkerboard schoolhouse. It has been the subject of news articles and even was in Believe-It or Not. One of the Districts formed in 1822, it was originally a log school called District #4 which burned, and another one room building which stood on the triangle between Rt. 98 and Kingsbury Hill Road, was built in 1841. That was when a vote was taken on whether to paint the school in the traditional red, or to go with a more modern white, and white won by a slim margin. "One moon light night, as the story goes, the red group gathered and started painting part of it red when Trustee Richard Robbins came up with the idea to paint it foot wide squares of red and white, like a checkerboard. That winter, ashes from the stove set fire to the building and it was a total loss. The early settlers were undaunted and rebuilt the schoolhouse and, and again on one moonlight night by united vigorous effort, the exact counterpart of the first checkerboard was erected. The sunrise the next morning shone on a new building with its brilliant checks of red and white paint still moist! The following night at the sacrifice of some handsome and highly prized homespun gowns, the loyal women constructed a flag to fly triumphantly over the new school building." In the early 1900's it was painted gray but such a howl went up, alumni in the area raised funds to have it repainted in the red and white checks again.

The school closed after its centennial term in 1941 and centralized with Franklinville. In 1948, Lyle Rogers purchased it and transformed it into a residence still keeping the checkerboard pattern. In 1955, owners Alfred and Stella Markiewicz painted the side by Rt. 98 white and it hardly received a mention. Some other owners have been Clifford Green and Dawn Tatlow. Presently, painted yellow, it is owned by Joseph Kloz, a priest from Buffalo.

Some teachers at the school were Mrs. Earl Wenrick, Howard Lane, Minnie Kenfield, and Grace Mallory Schnell (Gert Schnell's mother), who taught there from 1925 to 1927. It is with thanks to her, we have some of the following information. She boarded by the week with the Ormiston, who went to meet her in a Model A Ford in good weather and horse and buggy or cutter in winter, at the train station in Franklinville where she arrived from Olean. Then, on Friday she was taken back to the train. School hours were from 9 am to 4 pm. Mrs. Ormiston would build a fire in the morning in the round oak stove in the center of the building when it was needed and the pupils and teacher kept it going during the day. When the winds and snow blew in through the sills, all would move nearer the stove to keep warm. Recess was held outdoors and sliding was a pastime in the winter. She taught all 8 grades plus music, drawing, nature study and a little home economics. There were no substitutes. If the teacher was ill, there would be no school. Rest rooms were out behind the schoolhouse, with a high fence also painted checkerboard, separating

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the girls from the boys. Water was carried in a pail from neighboring farms and each pupil brought his own cup from home and it hung on a nail above the pail and dipper.

Some of the pupils who attended the Checkerboard school were John, Martha and Nora Hahn; Athlene, Lois and Virgil Holmes; Lewelyn Graham; Carl Auge; Frances Luceba Thomas; Harmon McVey; the Bonds; Robbins; Robisons; Greenes; Forwards; Whaleys; Williams; Smiths; Bakers and Darlings.

Submitted by Alice Wright, Farmersville Historian