



## BICENTENNIAL SERIES

# A history of Thompson Twp. & Village of Thompson

Mrs. Hasell Osterhout

At one time there were as many as eight schools in Thompson Township. Two were located in the village with the remainder in the outlying areas.

Schools number 1 and 2 were located in the village, no. 3, the Lockhart School, was on Flodin Road. The Vincent School, no. 4, was on the Little Harbor Road south of the village. This school is believed to be the oldest of the schools in the area. No. 5, the Barque Point School, was located still further down the Little Harbor Road. The first pump and well at the school are still in use today.

No. 6, the Van Garder School, was located on M-149 near the Soo Line Railroad tracks. No. 7, the Lou Miller School, was located near Big Springs. No. 8, the Harrison School, was located at South Town.

The reason for the large number of schools was not to accommodate a large number of students. In the late 1890's under 200 students were enrolled in the schools. But where ever there were seven or more children of school age living within seven miles of each other, a school was built and a teacher was provided.

Enrollment was compulsory for children between the ages of 8 and 14.

The school buildings all consisted of one main room. In 1899 the No. 1 school in the village was expanded to a three room building. Fred Hinkson, Sr., did the major portion of the remodeling work.

Transportation to and from school was, of course, by foot except when a lucky student could catch a ride with a passing farmer. A farmer in the Barque Point area provided transportation for the students either by horse and wagon or sleigh. His horse, Jenny Lind, had traveled the route so often she needed no reins or lines for guidance. She would also stop along the route at the proper place to pick up or drop off the students.

In the winter bells were strung on the harness to warn approaching sleighs. Straw and heavy blankets were also added in the winter for warmth.

School teachers at that time were paid \$30 a month for a six month term. Their duties included janitor work, pumping water and firing the wood stove as well as teaching.

One of the early dedicated teachers was

Miss Adaline Wagar. She was born in Thompson of Swedish parents and could speak very little English. At age seven, she entered school and went on to become one of Michigan's outstanding teachers.

Her career started at age 17 when she was advised by a county commissioner to try and take the State Teachers Examination that was given every spring at the county courthouse. She passed the two day test and went on to become a teacher in 1907.

Her starting salary was \$35 a month. Five years later she was making \$60 a month and working 10 months of the year. During this time she taught all eight grades in the same room.

She had retired from the Grosse Pointe Farms School system after writing two kindergarten books and receiving recognition in state historical and education magazines.

The Little Harbor School was moved from Barque Point and relocated near the bluff in later years. Not long after it was abandoned.

But in the early 1930's some infamous occupants moved in. John Dillinger and his gang holed up in the building for a week, burning it down when they left. The gang was recognized in Thompson when they stopped for gas at Jim Herro's store. They were reportedly headed for Wisconsin at the time.



PICTURED ABOVE is the Thompson No. 1 School. The picture was taken around 1899 after the addition of two rooms was made.