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# Early-Day Thompson Schools Recalled

Efforts underway in Thompson township to provide more comfortable school facilities for students are bringing to the attention of residents early day schools in the area.

Thompson township, in the late 1800s operated eight schools, six of which were built of logs and two which were larger and of frame construction. The frame units were the Van Gorder school, on the present Ernest Hoholik farm property, and the Lou Miller, near the Big Spring.

The log buildings are all gone but one, that standing across from the town hall at Thompson. These units were the Lockhart, near the Gunnar Flodin farm, the Vincents, on the Little Harbor road near Thompson, the Little Harbor school on the old Tellis Farley property, the Harrison at Southtown and two in Thompson. The schools were located where there were seven or more students.

### No Report Cards

Mrs. John (Pearl) Olsen, a member of the Thompson board of education and a life-long resident of the township, states the old Vincents school is believed to have been the first of the eight district schools. Later these eight were consolidated into two and then one.

In those years, Mrs. Olsen recalls, teachers received \$30.00 a month and did their own janitor work. This included firing a wood stove, pumping water, sweeping and cleaning. Many hands from boys and girls in the school helped lighten the work, though, and students competed to see who could be of most help to the teacher.

No report cards were given and "poor marks" were not heard about. There was no way to "get out" of the day's assignments, as these had to be completed before a student could go home.

### Bright Students Helped

"The teachers could outstay anyone and few wanted to walk home in the dark," Mrs. Olsen recalls. "Students missing a word wrote it 100 times, and as many hundred as it took to learn the words. There was no mention of bright or retarded children then. The distinction was between good workers and lazy people.

"Good workers were rewarded for fast work by being assigned

to help smaller children, taking them out to play games after their work was completed."

"Students who had trouble learning their ABCs stayed in at playtime with good workers helping them learn. Thus by the time boys and girls reached the end of eight grades, they were allowed to teach.

By the time students reached 17 to 18 years, they had teaching, understanding of others' problems and had learned responsibility, dignity and self-respect," Mrs. Olsen adds.

### Inspired High Ideals

The compulsory school age then was 8 to 14 years. Both teachers and children walked several miles to and from school. Many spinster school teachers were found then, as teachers were dedicated people and spent much time and devotion on their charges. School boards too, frowned on married teachers.

"To be late or absent was never tolerated. Those late stayed to make up the time."

"The district school boards and the dedicated men and women who taught inspired the nation's youth to high ideals. Lessons learned in the "little Red School" have laid the foundation for the greatest nation on earth. These served their time, regarding their duty as the making of good Americans. The system was the root that brought forth our great educational systems.

### Progress Made

"We have made progress and will continue to, in our God-given freedom," she adds. "The board of education is seeking a modern

school equal to others of our time now. Members of the board are among the highest taxpayers in our township and feel they owe a better school to the community," she adds.

Mrs. Olsen can remember attending the old township school across from the town hall and later the Little Harbor school, where students played on a hill and walked several miles along the water's edge to get to classes.

"That was the best that could be provided then. Each generation, though, sees more progress made."



This is the old ship, which is the proposal. War I period