



From Meridian Consolidated School No. 2

# OKEMOS CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

History 1844-1921



By Sherrie Paty Barber

Okemos Class of 1966

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Okemos Alumni Association

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The history of school consolidation in Michigan began at the Federal level with the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act of 1917 which provided federal funds for the promoting of vocational education. According to the 1942 publication, "History of Agricultural Education of Less than A College Grade In The United States; a cooperative project of worker's in vocational education in agricultural and in related fields," "the first law pertaining to centralization of school and transportation of pupils at public expense was passed in 1891, but it was 1917 before the Rural Agricultural School Act was passed, and 2 years later before State aid was made available for transportation of pupils to these consolidated schools.

Annual school meeting of District No. two (2), Meridian township, Ingham county

Okemos, July 9, 1918

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, W. C. Allen.

The report of the secretary read and accepted. The report of the treasurer read and accepted. The motion was made and carried that the school board purchase a service flag for the school.

Election of officers: E. A. Olin and Charles Strayer were elected for three years. W. C. Allen was elected for one year to fill vacancy.

The motion was made and carried to allow the officers their annual salaries.

The motion was made and carried to adjourn.

Signed, E. A. OLIN, Director

#### Financial Statement of District No. 2, Meridian Township.

Amount of moneys July 9, 1917..	\$ 174.53	Paid men teachers .....	\$ 801.90
Library .....	5.31	Paid women teachers .....	985.05
Received from primary money....	734.40	Teachers' retirement fund .....	13.87
Received from library .....	23.46	Paid for library books .....	15.15
Received from tuition .....	220.50	High school tuition .....	120.00
District taxes .....	1600.00	Insurance .....	6.25
Borrowed money .....	150.00	Labor, tiling water sewerage.....	40.22
Received from dog tax fund .....	114.24	Kaustine for toilets .....	39.50
Received from old iron .....	5.75	Interest on borrowed money.....	7.50
<b>Total receipts, including moneys</b>		Lime, cement, etc. ....	15.94
on hand July 9, 1917 .....	<b>\$3028.19</b>	Pipe and pump.....	14.82
		Coal .....	570.66
		Supplies for rooms .....	20.85
		Stationery & supplies for primary	20.92
		Officers' salaries .....	55.00
		Janitor .....	218.25
		Cleaning schoolhouse .....	10.00
		Teachers' registers .....	1.32
		Team work .....	5.00
		Pencil sharpeners .....	3.00
		Door mats .....	6.50
		Diplomas .....	10.57
		Promotion cards .....	1.00
		Needles, scissors, etc. for prim-	
		army room .....	14.49
		Money on hand, July 8, 1918	
		General fund .....	16.81
		Library fund .....	13.62
		<b>Total expenditures, including</b>	
		amount on hand .....	<b>\$3028.18</b>



In 1919 rural agricultural schools were allowed \$1,000 for maintenance, and \$400 per bus route.... Michigan passed a rural agricultural act in 1917, amended in 1919 and 1921, which in part stated, "An Act to provide for the establishment of rural agricultural schools by consolidating three or more rural schools in any school or township district."

From the late 1800's into the 1920's a number of small school houses dotted Meridian and Alaiedon townships in Ingham County. County wise there were 128 operating schools in 1919-1920 and 1920-1921 school years. School house locations were generally chosen for centralization of

Education was an important, basic need for the pioneers, and space was used where available. The first local school was convened in 1844 in a cooper shop owned by Daniel Young. The school was located east of Okemos along Hamilton Road, and Samantha Worden taught the children for \$1 a week. A minimum of five children needed to be enrolled for the school to have legal status; two of the five children were enrolled at age three in order to meet the requirement.



*Reprinted with permission from [Images of America: Meridian Township](#) by Jane Rose 2015*

student population. One farm family could almost populate a one-room school house but generally consideration was given to walking (or horse riding) distance, where the school teacher would be boarded and how many children were within the designated area. The Okemos school was among the several school houses dotting Meridian township. It often was referred to as Meridian District School No. 2 or Meridian #2. The other 8

small school districts were: Hammond (#6), Mullett (#5), Carl (#7), Bennett, Marble, Legg and Sand Hill (#9). After the 1923 consolidation of 6 schools took place, the system was simply referred to as Okemos Consolidated School.



As was common for the time, numerous small schools were built throughout the township to allow children to walk to school. More often than not, the land was donated or loaned by a local family who had school-age children. The Bennett School was built at the corner of Bennett and Hagadorn Roads and continued in operation at that site until the consolidation of all rural schools into one central site in 1921. The superintendent of Okemos schools then moved the building to Mount Hope Road west of Okemos Road and converted it to a private residence.

*Reprinted with permission from [Images of America: Meridian Township](#) by Jane Rose 2015*

As the 20th century progressed so did schoolhouse structure requirements, teacher educational standards, principles of learning and organization of governing the local schools. Governing board members were elected, scheduled public meetings were held and innovative pupil transportation via school "bus" was begun. But poor schooling conditions in some school houses remained a controversial and worrying subject.



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 3 July 1913

## 'MOST OF COUNTRY SCHOOL BUILDINGS FAULTY'--WRIGHT

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION SAYS EVERY CHILD  
ENTITLED TO REASONABLE DECENT QUARTER

IMPROVE CONDITIONS

STATE WILL AWARD METAL TABLETS TO BE PLACED OVER  
SCHOOLHOUSE DOORS TO DISTRICTS WHICH COME UP TO STANDARD  
SET BY EDUCATOR.

Declaring that every child who attends school is entitled to reasonably decent quarters, Superintendent L. L. Wright of the state department of public instruction, is sending out to the school boards or rural districts a plan for establishing "standard schools." He calls attention in his circular to the fact that the state requires every child between the ages of seven and 14 to attend school, but the state has no control over the conditions under which the child attends school, and then says "most of the country school buildings are very faulty in matters of heat, light, ventilation and sanitation."

**After 1921, Old Okemos School housed the intermediate  
classes and became known as the Little School**



Old Okemos School, built ca. 1873, originally located on Clinton Street.

*Reprinted with permission from [Turning Back the Pages – A Pictorial History of Okemos and Haslett](#) by Paula Gangopadhyay and Edited by Carlene Webster, 2000*

## SPECIFICATIONS FOR STANDARD SCHOOL

For the "standard school" Superintendent Wright proposes certain specifications which is complied with by the school board will entitle that school to a metal tablet to be placed over the schoolhouse door, the tablet to bear the words: "Standard School," and a diploma for hanging in the school building which will state that the school has been awarded the distinguished honor of being put in the standard school class. Included in the requirements are ample grounds of at least an acre, with some trees and scrubs tastily arranged, good approaches to the schoolhouse; proper sanitation and a suitable place or room for fuel.



The above photograph shows the intermediate class of the old Okemos School prior to 1921. Student names are unavailable. The teacher, shown in the upper right corner, was Agnes Polhenins Young. Once the large, brick, consolidated school was opened in 1921, all intermediate classes were transferred to that building, and the old school became known as the "little school."

*Reprinted with permission from [Images of America: Meridian Township](#) by Jane Rose 2015*

The schoolhouse requirements include a house well built, painted and in good repair, on a good foundation; well lighted; attractive interior decorations; good blackboards, some suitable for small children; heated with room heater and ventilator in corner or basement furnace which



brings clean air into the room and drives out the foul; suitable desks, maps, globe, dictionary and sanitary drinking facilities. The school must be well organized as to grades, with a definite program of recitation and study; regular attendance; good discipline and at least eight months of school. The teacher must receive at least \$360 a year and be such a teacher as can be ranked by the county commissioner as "good" or "superior."

#### SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT URGED

The superintendent urges school officers to consult the department relative to plans for school buildings when it is planned to erect them, and urges the adoption of scientific management in this matter.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday 6 August 1913

#### MAY PAY TUITION

Heretofore a school district has not been permitted to pay tuition for students who had not completed the eighth grade, as long as the district was maintaining a school. Under the law which will go into effect August 14, the district board may pay tuition for those children who reside nearer a schoolhouse. Many boys and girls have been compelled to walk several miles further to their own district schoolhouse than a neighboring one because the township boards refused to change the boundaries.

Another newspaper out of Shreveport, Louisiana, reported on school conditions in Ingham County. It would seem that a public health bulletin from the Michigan State Department of Health stirred that publication. Of course Louisiana seemed to be a notch above Michigan in their public school laws governing sanitation.

The Times (Shreveport, Louisiana) Thursday 12 December 1912

**JAILS VS. SCHOOLS** A recent issue of Public Health, the bulletin of the Michigan State Department of Health, contains a striking example of the ridiculous limitations often placed on public health work. The board


recently condemned the Ingham County jail because some of the cells were below the ground level and were not in sanitary condition. The county was compelled to build a new jail that was sanitary. In District 6, Lansing township, Ingham County, there is a school house which has a basement room lighted and ventilated by five small windows. In this room were crowded fifty-five small children. The conditions as to light

and ventilation were as bad in the school room as in the jail cell. Yet the State Board of Health has no power to order the school board to provide sanitary school rooms, nor, apparently, has any other body.

These facts are shown on the front page of the bulletin in an impressive cartoon bearing the suggestive questions, "If the State can protect criminals, why can't it protect school children?" Why indeed? asks the Journal of the American Medical Association. It is gratifying to know that the Ingham County School Board is doing everything in its power to improve the situation. But the fact remains that under the present law in Michigan, all plans for jails are subject to the approval of the State Board of Health, while school houses may be built and are built without any sanitary supervision whatever. Similar conditions are all too common in other States, although we believe this is not the case in Louisiana, where the health authorities enjoy the widest latitude with respect to remedying bad sanitary conditions.

***Seeds of Change: Daisy Call  
runs for School  
Commissioner, April 1919***

(POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT)



To the Voters of Ingham County:  
Having been regularly nominated at the Primaries for County School Commissioner on the Republican ticket, and because of my work as critic at Cheboygan County normal I am prevented from conducting my campaign. I, therefore, have to depend upon my father, H. O. Call, to do it for me. I am a product of Ingham County, having been born and reared here, and therefore, am interested in everything that tends to keep our County at the forefront in all matters that pertain to the betterment of her people.  
I graduated from Mason High School in 1913, from the Ingham County Normal in 1914; taught in



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 31 July 1919

## BIDS WANTED

### WANTED TRANSPORTATION BIDS

The school board of district No. 6 of the township of Meridian will receive on or before August 10 sealed bids for the transportation of seven pupils to and from Okemos school each day of the school year. Bids will be considered for the whole term or any fraction thereof. Right is resumed to reject any or all bids. Further information may be received from the board. Address all bids to Dennis Benjamin, School Director, Okemos, Mich.

One of Meridian townships small schools, #6, found board members at odds in 1919. By 1920 the school was no longer in operation, pupils were sent to Okemos for schooling.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 6 November 1919

(Note: the writer of the news article consistently misspelling the surname Grettenberger)

### MERIDIAN TWP. NOW SUBSIDES

### MRS. DORMER SURVIVES BIG STORM

### STRONG WORDS HURLED

### "DISGRACE TO SCHOOL DISTRICT," IS AMONG ISSUES NOW THRESHED OUT

The "devil has been whipped around the stump" and now on the surface, all is peaceable with the board of Meridian school district No. 6, with two new members serving in the place of the two whose offices were declared vacant for different reasons.

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Director Dennis Benjamin, as a member of the board, refused to draw a warrant for paying \$100 to Mrs. Dormer and the "fat was in the fire." Before the conflagration was extinguished, Dormer and William Grittenberger ceased to be members of the board and Herman Grittenberger, a brother of William, and Mrs. Cecelia Hammond, were elected on the school board.

Also, out of the fracas, came circulating of a petition against Benjamin charging him with "disgracing the school district," that he "tried to remove the treasurer," and that he refused to pay for transportation of pupils.

The petition was signed by about one-fifth of the voters of the district, and the Grittenberger relatives are alleged to constitute that proportion of the voters of the district.

Behind the immediate cause of the trouble is a "neighborhood scrap" with numerous ramifications which threatened for a time to interfere seriously with operations of the schools.

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Benjamin refused to draw the warrant for paying her, on the grounds that the team and wagon to be used was really owned by Dormer, and that it is illegal under Michigan's constitution and laws for an official to receive benefit directly or indirectly from a contract made by him in his official capacity.

Feeling on the board was bitter, Grittenberger and Dormer stood against Benjamin.

Grittenberger, as treasurer was willing to pay Mrs. Dormer. Her husband was perfectly willing to approve the payment into his own family's coffers. Benjamin, however, steadfastly refused to write out the warrant without which payment could not be made.

Wilford L. Coffey, assistant superintendent of public instruction, summoned public instruction, summoned board members to Mason, where he informed them that the contract with Mrs.

Dormer was illegal, that members of the board could be and would be held personally liable for any payments to her. This was after Dormer had admitted substantially that Mrs. Dormer's interest in the team and wagon was that statutorily given to a wife by the laws of Michigan.

He also discovered that though William Grittenberger had a bond he had not completed qualifying as treasurer by filing his bond with the board as plainly required by law. This automatically vacated his office. Then the township board re-appointed Grittenberger. He

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Moderator Dormer resigned. This created two vacancies requiring a special election. This was called and Mrs. Hammond and Merman Grittenberger were elected.

The board was then organized and proceeded to business.

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"Polk's Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1921-1922," recorded data on Michigan's income tax returns: "Per capita net income, \$181.41; average net income per return, \$3,663.26; per capita income tax, \$15.25; average amount of tax per return, \$308.03." The average income per family across Michigan for 1919 was about \$3,666.00. In 1920 the average per month farm wage across the US was \$60.00 per month. Sale records for the year 1915 listed land selling at \$70.00 per acre in Meridian township. Mrs. Dormer's \$400 yearly bus route income was considered a significant addition to the Dormer household!



### Consolidation of Schools.

Lansing, Feb. 16.

Editor State Journal:

There are ten school districts within a radius of five miles of Okemos all of which are going to vote on the consolidation in their territory with that of other contiguous territory in order that a rural agricultural school may be organized according to Act. 226, Public Acts of 1917, as amended, five of which have their election set for Saturday, Feb. 21. The following facts and figures obtained from the files of department of public instruction: It cost in 1918-19 to maintain these ten school districts, teaching to eight grades, the sum of \$9,628.71, to this must be added \$500 for tuition to outside school, making a total of \$10,128.71. There are in these schools an average daily attendance of 220 pupils which were taught to the eighth grade at a per capita cost of \$42.55. Now in the Mattawan Consolidated school of Van Buren county there are seven school districts having an average daily attendance of 206 pupils, schooled to 12 grades at a per capita cost of \$40.59 or \$1.94 cents less than our little one room district school, where we have from 15 to 31 per cent pass the eighth grade. Mattawan Consolidated school has

31 per cent pass. These pupils are transported to and from school to their homes, ours have to walk as far as two miles through all kinds of weather. In Mattawan school, the pupils all have an equal advantage to high school education regardless of their financial circumstances where exactly six per cent of our pupils ever get in to high school, the records show. The qualifications necessary to vote on this vital question. You must be parents or legal guardian of pupils enrolled in the school or taxpayers of property assessed for school taxes in your district. In addition to these qualifications you must be 21 years of age, a full citizen of the United States, and have resided three months in your district prior to the election. If you are entitled to vote don't fail to do so Saturday, Feb. 21, 1920, and give the pupils of our rural district an equal chance to high school advantages as have their city cousin and finish making life worth living on the farm with less expense to the taxpayers.

DENNIS BENJAMIN,  
Dart Dist. No. 6.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Tuesday 20 January 1920

## PLAN CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS AT OKEMOS MOVEMENT LAUNCHED FOR UNION OF MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Okemos, Jan. 20 - A movement has been launched in Meridian township for the construction of a consolidated grade and high school at Okemos, and the plan is meeting with strong support. Eugene Kelly of Okemos has offered to donate an acre of land on the edge of Okemos, in the center of the township, as the site for the proposed school.

The project is being promoted by Dennis Benjamin, school director of District No. 6, aided by Miss Daisy I. Call, county school commissioner, and others. According to the present plans, from three to seven districts would unite to build the school, all located in Meridian or Alaiedon townships, and providing for probably at least 175 pupils.

Mr. Benjamin says that the assessed valuation of these districts is in the neighborhood of \$2,000,000. By adding courses in sowing, cooking, manual training and agriculture the school would receive \$600 maintenance yearly and \$200 for transportation of pupils from the state. Mr. Benjamin declares that a consolidation school would require less teachers and while 10 are now needed for three districts, six would probably be sufficient for the one school. There is a shortage of teachers at present, so this reduction in the demand would

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Union of Meridian  
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**Special to The State Journal.**

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The school in District No. 6 at present is closed, and the seven pupils are going to Okemos. The cost for transportation is only about half the expense of operating the school, Mr. Benjamin says. At present there is no high school here, and all township high school students are obliged to go to Lansing or Mason. Bonds for 15 years could be issued, and the saving made by such a consolidated school would go a long way toward paying for the cost, it is estimated by those back of the plan. It is also pointed out that such modern school facilities would tend to keep the young people on the farm instead of requiring them to go to the city schools. The school board in District No. 6 favors such a consolidated school, and interest in the project is steadily growing.



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Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 23 January 1920

#### HOLD MEETING ON NEW JOINT SCHOOL

#### MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS PLAN AT OKEMOS

Okemos, Jan 23 - A meeting of representatives from the various school districts in Meridian township will be held Saturday evening at 7 o'clock in the township clerk's office here for the purpose of considering the proposed construction of a consolidated school. The movement is meeting with strong support and the plans in detail will be discussed, and the methods of procedure will probably be decided upon. The school would be built under the rural agricultural school act of the state.

The representatives of the different districts who have been named and will attend this meeting are; Hammond district, Dennis Benjamin; Mullett, Charles Fink; Carl, W. H. Knickerbocker; Bennett, Charles Wilson; Marble, Mrs. Hewan; Legg, Louis Degg; Sand Hill, Mark Allen; Okemos, Clifford Ricks.



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Monday 26 January 1920

## TO SUBMIT SCHOOL PLANS TO BOARDS

### MEETING AT OKEMOS APPROVES CONSOLIDATION, GOES TO REFERENDUM VOTE

Okemos, Jan. 26 - The plan to consolidate eight school districts in Meridian and Alaiedon townships was approved at a meeting held here Saturday evening. About 50 were present and the matter was explained in detail and endorsed.

As a result of this meeting a movement will be started to organize under the rural agricultural school act. The school board of each district will be asked to submit the consolidated school plan to a referendum vote of the people. If this is done notices will be posted calling the election. If the consolidation is approved the question of constructing the school at Okemos, the cost and necessary appropriation will be taken up.

Another meeting will be held at the schoolhouse in Okemos, Thursday evening at 8 o'clock to report progress and efforts are being made to secure a speaker. The meeting will be public and all interested are invited to attend.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 27 February 1920

Okemos school district voted Saturday in regard to consolidation of schools. The votes proved a strong plurality in favor.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 4 March 1920

## JOINT SCHOOL AT OKEMOS ASSURED

### THREE DISTRICTS HAVE APPROVED OF PLAN, ONE TIED, ONE OPPOSED

Okemos, March 4 - The construction of a consolidated school here in the near future is practically assured, as three districts have already voted favorably on the proposition, which is a sufficient number under the law to warrant proceeding with the pans, according to Dennis Benjamin, a leading promoter of the project.

The votes on the plan are as follows: District No. 1, 95 to 4; District No. 2, 65 to 7, and District No. 5, 12 to 4 for consolidation. District No. 3 had a tie vote, 13 to 13, and another election will be held March 20,. District No. 6 voted 16 to 7 against the proposition, but it is said that personal matters played a part in the vote. Districts Nos. 7 and 8 have not yet acted on the matter.

E. E. Gallup, East Lansing, of the department of public instruction, will speak at the Bennett school March 13 at 8 p.m. in behalf of the consolidated school.

It is estimated that the cost will be approximately \$30,000, and will include an auditorium and gymnasium, which may be used for a community center. Both grad and high school studies will be included, as well as home economics, manual training and agriculture.

After the school this year the districts will be reorganized and plans will be started for the construction of the school next summer.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Tuesday 28 June 1921

## OKEMOS TO HAVE CENTRAL SCHOOL

### SCHOLARS OF SIX DISTRICTS TO ATTEND; WORK ON BUILDING STARTS SOON

Okemos, June 28 - Work on a rural agricultural school building, located in this village, will be begin at once. Bonds to the amount of \$60,000 for the erection of building have been voted by the various districts.

The scholars of six school districts will attend the new school which includes 250 pupils.

The bonds which were voted extend over a period of 30 years.

But there were those who opposed such a consolidation!

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Monday 18 July 1921

## GIVES ORDER ON ALAIDEON SCHOOL

Judge Leland W. Carr in circuit court Monday granted a temporary restraining order forbidding the newly formed board of education of the proposed agricultural school in Alaiedon township from going ahead with preparations for the construction of a school building.

The action was taken on a petition filed several days ago by two districts of the township. the order was made returnable on Aug. 8.

Members of the new board were Dennis Benjamin, Mrs. Goldie Wilson, Charles Daniels, George Beaumont and Morton Allen.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday 10 August 1921

## GIVES SCHOOL CASE RULING

### JUDGE CARR SETS ASIDE TRUSTEE ELECTION

Judgment of ouster against the several trustees elected to an agricultural school district composed of several districts in Meridian and Alaiedon townships was handed down by Judge Leland W. Carr, of circuit court, Wednesday.

The judgment was given in response to an action of quo warranto instituted by the prosecuting attorney of the county to test the rights of the several trustees to hold office. The ousted trustees were chosen at an election conducted on June 25, 1921, by the second, third, fifth and sixth districts in Meridian township, and the fifth and ninth districts in Alaiedon township. The petitions for the election were presented to the county commissioner of schools May 18, 1921, from the several districts, requesting the commissioner to have submitted to a vote the question of uniting the several districts with "two or more contiguous school districts" for the purpose of establishing an agricultural district. It was contended by the prosecution that the clerk of Meridian township, in posting notices of the election, acted illegally and that therefore the election was illegal.



The judge, in his decision, referred to the authorization of the election, wrote:

"It should be noted that the county commissioner of schools did not in specific terms direct the clerk of Meridian township to call the election. In the communication sent to him by the commissioner there is nothing inconsistent with the theory that his duties should not extend beyond calling the board together to conduct the election and that the call should be made by the commissioner. Had the latter official been specifically authorized by the statute to require the clerk to perform his duty it could scarcely be said, on the face of this record, that any such authority was actually conferred. It follows from what has been said above that the action of the town clerk in publishing the call for the election of June 25th was wholly without authority of law. In consequence the election on that date was invalid, and the school district of which respondents claim to be trustees was not legally created."

After the election the board was requested to organize, and in his decision the judge wrote, "it appears that one of the school districts concerned turned over its case on July 13th. Injunction proceedings were instituted by certain taxpayers on the 14th of July and subsequently a temporary restraining order was issued forbidding the respondents to take over the money or property of other districts. This restraining order has been continued in force pending the hearing of the quo warranto case."

Under the decision given out by Judge Carr the school district ceases to exist and the trustees are without office.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 11 August 1921

BOARD TO CARRY UP SCHOOL FIGHT

APPEAL OVER JUDGE CARR'S DECISION IN CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL CASE

The board of trustees of the rural agricultural school district composed of six districts in the townships of Meridian and Alaieton against whom judgment of ouster was found by Judge Leland W. Carr, of circuit court, Wednesday, will appeal their case as soon as the necessary papers can be prepared, according to a statement by Dennis Benjamin, president of the ousted board, Thursday.

In declaring that the case would be carried to the higher court, Mr. Benjamin called attention to the vote of 203 in favor and 93 opposed which was recorded in the elections on June 25, 1919, but which Judge Carr ruled was an illegal poll on account of irregularities in serving notice of election.

### List Advantages

Mr. Benjamin in announcing the determination of the trustees to fight the case to a finish, called attention to the advantages in the proposed consolidated rural agricultural district as follows:

"It gives an opportunity for a four year high school course for every child in the school district.

"It makes it possible for parents to have the direct care and supervision of their children who are pursuing high school work during the critical

*Lansing State Journal Monday  
September 19, 1921*

### *Unified Schools.*

Rural school consolidation, while it is not sweeping Michigan as it has some states, is nevertheless making progress here, and the chances are that we shall soon hear a great deal about it.

The Brighton Argus, one of the weekly papers exchanging with The State Journal, comes to hand this week, giving an account of the election just held there and in contiguous school districts, in which consolidation has won by a vote of four to one. It is stated that the purely rural districts showed more opposition than the villages concerned, but even in the former the vote was two to one in favor of consolidation.

Now and then there is news of defeat for the project where school consolidation is up, but the trend of sentiment is apparently markedly in the other direction. There are some specific situations very likely where consolidation may not be present for the moment, but on the whole the idea is one that must prevail. If you live in a certain specific district, very likely you can raise fair objections why consolidation should not be effected in your particular case, for a time at least; but standing aloof from any particular situation, and viewing this problem wholly as a generality, it is next to impossible to call up any good reason why rural school consolidation should not come to be the general practice.

There are probably a few districts where the school patrons are dead set against consolidation; many more districts where the voters are halting between two opinions; but we have yet to hear of the districts where consolidation has been brought to pass and the system put into full operation, where the voters have even so much as considered going back to the old, district system.

years of their life, when the formation of moral and social habits are so easily affected by environment.

"It provides for fewer classes for each teacher so that each pupil may have the amount of attention that he should have in order to develop his intellectual abilities.

"It makes possible the securing of better trained and experienced teachers.

"It insures a higher percentage of school attendance.

"It insures a larger enrollment of children of school age within the district.

"It provides educational conditions so that the children may grow up under the influence of the ideals of a farm home.

"It provides for a course of study that may include agriculture, sewing, cooking manual training, music and drawing.

"it furnishes a more stable basis for financing the school district.

"It provides a place to foster and promote community ideals.

"It becomes a meeting-place for farmer's clubs, women's clubs, community clubs, literary societies, and lyceum courses.

"It prevents needless expense due to duplication of school apparatus and equipment.

"It usually provides for a longer term of school.

"It insures a better working library.

"It adds dignity, character, and force to rural education."



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Saturday 28 January 1922

## OKEMOS TAXPAYERS WILL VOTE UPON BONDS

Okemos, Jan. 28 - The bonds of \$85,000 for the building of a new school house will be voted upon by the taxpayers of the five consolidated school districts on Feb. 4. A sited has already been voted upon by the consolidated school board of education. Petitions have immediately been circulated by the taxpayers to alter their location.

At a cost of \$90,000.00 a school building was constructed in Okemos between 1922-1923 on 6 acres of land.



The quality of education received in rural one-room schools varied greatly depending on the resources of the community, and some graduates from eighth grade found entry into an area high school difficult. By 1920, Okemos followed the statewide trend of consolidating area schools into one central location to combine resources. The above photograph is of the Okemos consolidated school at the corner of Okemos and Mount Hope Roads. School buses were introduced to transport students living in far corners of the district.

*Reprinted with permission from [Images of America: Meridian Township](#) by Jane Rose 2015*

**Meridian Consolidated school No. 2, moved into the new school building this week. Two new courses have been added to the curriculum, music and Bible Study.**

**Mrs. Edith Bearup is instructor in music and Rev. F. D. Hague and Rev. McEntarfer have charge of Bible Study. Hot lunches under the supervision of Miss Margaret Tower, are served daily. It is expected that a course in Domestic Science will be offered next year. Lack of room and of facilities has been a drawback the present year, but the new building is expected to overcome many difficulties that have confronted both pupils and**

[Lansing State Journal](#), Thursday, May 3, 1923

Lansing State Journal  
(Lansing, Michigan) Thursday  
May 3, 1923

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Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Monday 6 August 1923

## MERIDIAN DISTRICT TO HOLD DEDICATION

Okemos, August 6 - Consolidated school district, Meridian, No. 2, will hold a dedication of the new schoolhouse and a reunion Saturday, August 25. All former residents of the fine districts, which combine to form the new district, are especially invited to return and spend the week-end with old friends. Pot luck dinner served at noon.

# COMMENCEMENT IN OKEMOS PLANNED

Meridian Consolidated School No. 2 Will Graduate Two Students June 1

Special to The State Journal

OKEMOS, May 25.—The first commencement of Meridian consolidated school No. 2, will be held Friday evening, June 1, at the new schoolhouse. Prof. Walter H. French of M. A. C., is the speaker.

Okemos has been a 10 grade school, so there are but two graduates this year, Carrie Hammond and Gladys Gubbins.

Miss Hammond took the junior year work at Grand Ledge, and Miss Gubbins at East Lansing.

Rev. F. D. Hague will deliver the baccalaureate address at the Baptist church Sunday morning, May 27.

The Junior-senior banquet will be held at the schoolhouse, Tuesday evening, May 29.

Lansing State Journal Friday May 25, 1923

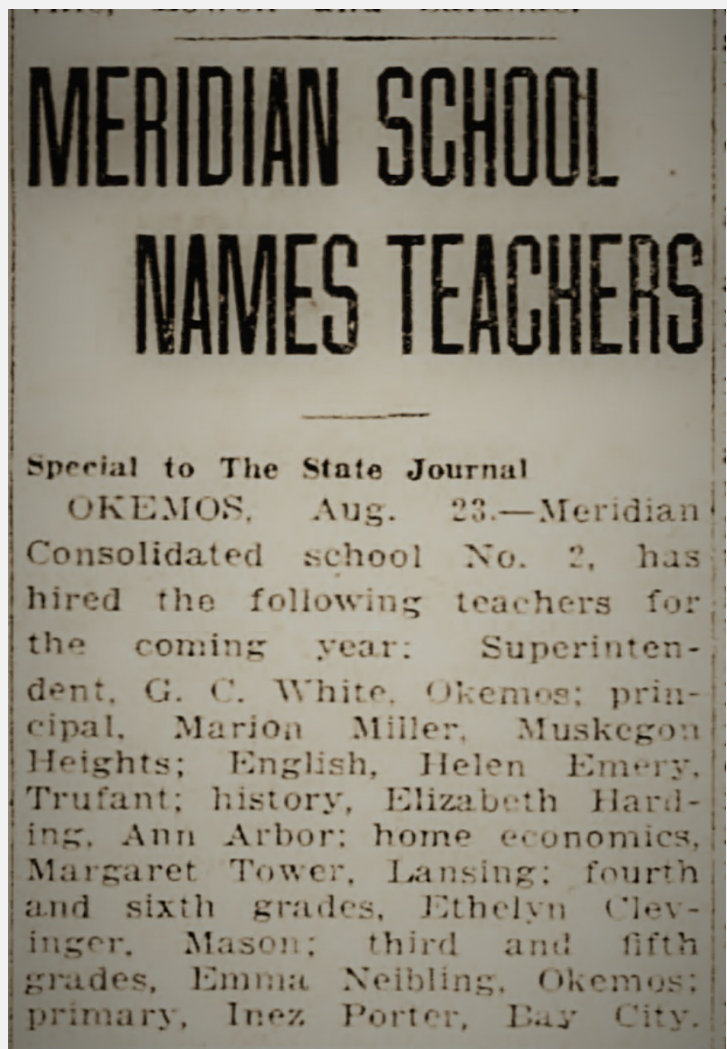


Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 23 August 1923

## MERIDIAN SCHOOL NAMES TEACHERS Okemos, Aug. 23 - Meridian

Consolidated school No. 2, has hired the following teachers for the coming year:

Superintendent, G. C. White, Okemos; principal, Marion Miller, Muskegon Heights; English, Helen Emery, Trufant; history, Elizabeth Haring, Ann Arbor; home economics, Margaret Tower, Lansing; fourth and sixth grades Ethelyn Clevinger, Mason; third and fifth grades Emma Neibling, Okemos; primary, Inez Porter, Bay City.



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Lansing State Journal, Aug 23, 1923



Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 23 August 1923

## WILL DEDICATE OKEMOS SCHOOL

### TWO BALL GAMES AND QUOIT PITCHING FEATURE SPORTS

Okemos, Aug. 23 - Final arrangements have been made for the dedication and homecoming to be held Saturday, Aug. 2, by the Rural Agricultural Consolidated school, Meridian, District number 2.

The vents of the day, as planned, follow: 10 a.m. Eastern standard time, sports followed by ball game, high school vs. alumni; quoit pitching preliminaries; noon, potluck dinner; 1:15 p.m., dedication program in auditorium,; music by Reo band; selection, Okemos Ladies quartette; address, Prof. M. S. Pittman, Ypsilanti, music, Reo band; finals in quoit contest; 3:30 ball game, Okemos vs. Laingsburg; 8:00 evening program, moving pictures. The building will be open for inspection all day.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Tuesday 28 August 1923

## PIONEERS, EDUCATORS, ATTEND OKEMOS SCHOOL DEDICATION

### 700 ATTEND CEREMONY AT CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL; FORMER STUDENTS SPEAK

Okemos, Aug. 28 - About 700 people attended the dedication and homecoming of Meridian consolidated school district No. 2, Saturday.

The ball game in the forenoon, between the present high school team and the alumni was called off at the end of the seventh inning, because of dinner, but the score then stood 8 to 2 in favor of the high school.

After an excellent pot-luck dinner, the dedication program was given in the auditorium.

The Reo band rendered several very pleasing numbers, after which the alumni were given an opportunity to speak. It was found that at least two persons were present who had attended school here in 1861.

One was Riley Crittendon of Howell, who was born in the old Ferguson house, Okemos; and another was Mrs. Martha Hewitt Barber, of Jackson, who was brought to this community when but eight months old, and spent her girlhood days on the farm, known for years as the Hewitt farm.

It is now called the Ardententeenie Stock Farm. At least two persons above 90 years of age, also were present. One was Mrs. Mary A. Stillman, who will be 91 in September, and the other was A. L. Sturges, whose 94th birthday will occur in December. Both have been residents of this community for many years.

E. E. Gallup, of Lansing, director of rural agricultural education in Michigan, was called for. C. L. Hullett was the first school director in Ingham county to hire Mr. Gallup as teacher, and that was for the Bennett School, nearly 30 years ago. After leaving the Bennett, Mr. Gallup superintended the Okemos school. An inquiry brought out the fact that there were about 30 of Mr. Gallup's former pupils in the room.

Mr. Gallup compared the little two room school house in the village, where he taught, with the beautiful modern building which Meridian district No. 2 now owns, and which stands just south of the town.

Prof. M. S. Pitman, head of the department of rural education, of the State Normal, Ypsilanti (see Editor's notes), then gave the address of dedication. He said that any achievement means dreams, work and sacrifice. But the dreams must come first.

Columbus, Franklin, Marconi, Edison and others were named by him as examples of men whom the world once called crazy dreamers. He said that a consolidated school shows that the majority of that community is looking toward the east, and saying: "The best is yet to be. Come on, and live with me."

He closed by comparing a community to a band, where each musician does

his part, whether great or small, producing perfect harmony. When each person does his or her part in the community spiritual band the result will be a harmonious community.

The Okemos Ladies quartet, with Winafred Hague Hammond at the piano then, sang "The Sandman," and for an encore, gave "Pussy's in the Well."

Rev. C. A. McEntarfer pronounced the benediction.

A ball game between Okemos and Laingsburg, followed and was won by Laingsburg, 6 to 3.

The quoit contest was won by Eli Spross and James Copp.

Supper was served to those who remained at the schoolhouse between the afternoon and evening meetings.

At 8 o'clock, a comedy moving picture was given and this was followed by "Silas Marner."

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700 Attend Ceremony at Consolidated School; Former Students Speak

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## SPRINGPORT

Special to The State Journal

SPRINGPORT, Aug. 28.—Sam Bly has purchased a lot in Eaton Rapids, where he expects to build a house.

Mrs. Ben Pelton underwent an operation on her eyes at the Battle Creek hospital. She is improving nicely.

Mrs. Fannie Murray has purchased a home in Lansing and will move there so that her daughter Lodema may attend Lansing high school and her other daughter Marjorie remain at home while filling a position as stenographer there.

Beginning with next Wednesday evening, the regular meetings of the Paul Steffe Post American Legion will be held on Wednesday evenings instead of Saturday as heretofore.

Miss Mildred Maddux of Chicago is spending her vacation at Mrs. C. E. Powers'.

Miss Evelyn Shear of Benton Harbor is visiting at the home of Will Corey.

Mrs. Lou Landon and daughter Janet are visiting in Jackson.

Miss Annice Hoag of Toledo, O., is spending her vacation with her parents who are camping in Gilman cottage at Duck Lake, this week.

Mrs. J. G. Babcock and daughter, Pauline, have returned to their home in Detroit after spending several weeks at the home of her father, A. P. Glascoff.

## Oneida Center Family Given Happy Surprise

Special to The State Journal

ONEIDA CENTER, Aug. 28.—Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bremger were pleasantly surprised Sunday, on their return from church, finding over 40 relatives and friends gathered to remind them of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

A dinner had been prepared. Charles Aldrich in behalf of those present made a few well chosen remarks and presented a quantity of pyrex and aluminum instead of the customary silver.

At this time it was decided to hold on the last Sunday in August a reunion of the Bremger families. The following were elected as officers for the next year: Mrs. Ed. Shelters, of Lansing, president; H. J. Bremger, secretary; Mrs. Frank Ewing, treasurer. Burnett Park will be

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 28 September 1923

## OKEMOS CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL SUCCESS

### APPROVED UNDER SMITH-HUGHES LAW

Okemos, Sept. 28 - Meridian Consolidated school, district No. 2, has a total enrollment of 230 this year, with a teaching force of nine. The enrollment in the primary room, alone, is 60, while the third and fifth grades have more than 50. In order to obtain the best results, it has been found necessary to divide these rooms and engage another teacher.

Five busses, under the direction of Dennis Benjamin, are operating daily. In spite of bad roads and detours, during the last year and the first month of this year, not a bus has been late for school, and no child has been injured through riding in the bus, although at time, they have been very crowded.

All pupils, living within a mile radius, walk, except in stormy weather, when they too, make use of the transportation system.

### SERVE HOT LUNCHES

Hot lunches are served to an average of 85 daily. It has been proven that a hot lunch will increase a child's efficiency in school, and some pupils bring part of their lunch and buy one or two hot dishes. Meal tickets are sold at a reasonable figure. A complete meal may be obtained from 14 to 20 cents. Everything is served cafeteria style, and each pupil returns his dirty dishes to the kitchen. The system works smoothly and

Lansing State Journal May 27, 1926

## *Okemos Students All Bankers Now*

The entire student body of Okemos school, about 240 children, are bankers. - Every child at the school has an account at the Capital National bank. The 100 per cent goal was reached during May. Mark Van Frank, in charge of the school savings department at the bank, credits the teachers of the school for the good showing.

The teaching staff of the school includes G. C. White, superintendent, J. C. Allen and Misses Golda Morford, Deming, M. S. Pratt, Irene Beaumont, Emma Niebling, Beulah Hager and Miriel Barr.

The average deposit of the Okemos school is 20 cents. Other schools in the city show that between 75 and 80 per cent of the children have accounts.



satisfactory and well-balanced meals are furnished.

#### GET GOVERNMENT MONEY

The school has been approved under the Smith-Hughes law, which allows \$1,000 per year from the government. This law requires the following: 100 must be spent on agricultural equipment, an agricultural teacher must be employed 12 months of the year, this teacher must be approved by the State Vocational board, at least 14 boys must complete summer projects, and a 4-year course of agriculture must be given. The school is also on the University of Michigan list, and beginning next week, will become a part of the training department of the Michigan Agricultural college.

The personnel of the staff, directly responsible for the management of this school, is as follows:

Superintendent, G. C. White; principal, Marion Miller; English, Helen Emery; history, Elizabeth Harding; home economics, Margaret Tower; supervisor of hot lunches, Ethelyn White; fourth and sixth grades, Ethelyn Straight; third and fifth grades, Emma Neibling; first and second grades, Inez Porter; janitor, Edward Herre; bus drivers, Dennis Benjamin, Vern Miles, Clyde Brown, Dr. L. L. Kelley and William Neibling.

#### HAVE MODERN EQUIPMENT

This school is housed in a modern building of fireproof construction, costing approximately \$90,000. Besides the regular assembly rooms, there are domestic science and domestic art rooms, an agriculture room, a science laboratory, a manual training room, shower rooms for both boys and girls, and a large gymnasium, which is also used as an auditorium, A large garage houses the five busses, which the school district owns.

The buildings stand upon six acres of ground. A ball diamond, a tennis court and various playground equipment, add to the enjoyment of the pupils and also to their physical development.

But there is always one in the crowd.....

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 30 November 1923

## EDITOR STATE JOURNAL

OKEMOS, NOVEMBER 26

As a voter and taxpayer in Rural Agricultural school Dis. No. 2, of Meridian, Ingham county, Michigan, I would challenge the school board and superintendents of said district to answer, through this column, the following matters:

1st. - Why is our district paying two domestic science teachers for work that could and should be done by one teacher?

2nd. - Why can we afford two of the above mentioned teachers, and no music and drawing teacher?

When I voted for the new school district and the bond issue, it was with the distinct understanding and supposition that we were to have such a department.

3rd. - Why did the school board decide last year to hire no married teachers, and to refuse to reengage the only married woman on the faculty, only to allow the superintendent to engage his wife as domestic science teacher?

Normal schools and college are running over with eager applicants for such positions, a large number of them girls who have secured their educations in order to hold a self supporting position.

4th. - Where are the gardens kept by the members of agricultural projects?

The board, so it reported, hired the superintendent to oversee these gardens during the summer at an increase of approximately \$350 per year. I repeat. Where are the gardens?

These queries are a matter of interest to a large number of our citizens, and an answer should be forthcoming, if an answer can be made. I thank you.

A TAXPAYER.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Tuesday 20 December 1955

The board also approved the changing of the name of the school from the Okemos Consolidated school to the Okemos Public schools.


Two names were consistently prominent in the 1920-1923 consolidation movement; Daisy I. Call, County Commissioner of Schools and Dennis Benjamin, an Ingham County business man. Both individuals were movers and shakers in the storms that continually seemed to try and derail the school merger. Daisy Ione Call, daughter of Harrison Orlando Call (1842-1926) and Sarah Isabelle (Lindsay) (1855-1940) Call, was born 26 March 1895, Ingham County, Michigan. She graduated in 1913 from Mason High School, 1914 from Ingham County Normal School and in 1918 from Ypsilanti State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University) with a bachelors degree. Daisy taught rural school in Ingham County from 1915-1916. From 1918-1919 she was employed as "critic of the County Normal at Cheboygan," Michigan. Daisy put forth her name as candidate for Ingham County Commissioner of Schools in 1919 and was so elected in November 1919. She became the first woman school commissioner in the State of Michigan, serving from 1919 until 1923.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Saturday 11 January 1919

## MASON WOMAN WANTS TO BE SCHOOL HEAD

Mason, Jan. 11 - Miss Daisy I. Call, daughter of H. O. Call of this city, is the first person to announce her candidacy for the office of commissioner of schools to succeed f. E. Searl, whose term expires July 1. Miss Call, who at present is normal critic in the Cheboygan County Normal,

(POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT.)



To the Voters of Ingham County:  
Having been regularly nominated at the Primaries for County School Commissioner on the Republican ticket, and because of my work as critic at Cheboygan County normal I am prevented from conducting my campaign. I, therefore, have to depend upon my father, H. O. Call, to do it for me. I am a product of Ingham County, having been born and reared here, and therefore, am interested in everything that tends to keep our County at the forefront in all matters that pertain to the betterment of her people.  
I graduated from Mason High School in 1913, from the Ingham County Normal School in 1914, and from Ypsilanti State Normal College in 1918.  
1915-16; I was graduated from the State Normal College at Ypsilanti in 1918 with a Life Certificate and Degree of Bachelor of Pedagogy. I was elected to the Stoic Honorary Society, the Minerva Literary Society and the Cabinet of the Y. W. C. A. I am now employed as critic of the County Normal at Cheboygan.  
If I am elected, I shall strive by applying the modern methods of teaching with which I am familiar, to place our schools in the front rank of the schools of the state.  
Cordially yours,  
DAISY I. CALL.  
To whom it may concern:  
I wish to express my approval of the candidacy of Daisy I. Call for the office of County Commissioner of Schools of Ingham County. During her stay at the Normal College, Miss Call established a reputation for all-round ability, right mindedness and push, which would go far toward qualifying her for the office. Her friends at the Normal believe in her, and confidently predict her success.  
E. ESTELLE DOWNING,  
Assec. Professor of Rhetoric,  
M. S. N. C.

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is a product of Ingham county, a graduate of the Mason high school, of the Ingham County Normal and of the State Normal at Ypsilanti, and has served her apprenticeship as a rural teacher in this county.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Saturday 5 April 1919

To the Voters of Ingham County:

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Assoc. Professor of Rhetoric

M.S.N.C.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Friday 7 May 1919

## TOWNSHIP RETURNS CLINCH NOMINATION

### BELIEVE VICTORY OF DAISY CALL ASSURED THROUGH THREE TOWNSHIPS NOT IN

The nomination of Daisy I. Call as the Republican candidate for county school commissioner was assured late Thursday night when returns from four outlying townships reached the office of county clerk Vernon J. Brown.

The early lead of 60 votes taken by Miss Call on the first compilation of returns was increased to 82 votes when Onandaga township came through with a majority of 27 in her favor. John E. Kennedy the defeated candidate gained a few votes in Meridian and Leroy townships and broke even in Bunkerhill.

With three townships, Lansing, white Oak and Wheatfield yet to be heard from it is thought that the final result will not be materially changed.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Saturday 11 June 1921

Mason, June 11 - Simplicity and quiet beauty distinguished the Bartley-Call wedding here Friday afternoon, when Daisy I. Call, Ingham county commissioner of schools, and Hugh J. Bartley, agricultural teacher in the Mason high school, were quietly married at the Baptist church, of which the bride is a member.

Promptly at 4 o'clock, Miss Mariam Longyear took her place at the pipe organ, and as she played, relatives and near friends entered the church. As the strains of the wedding march pealed out the bridal party took their

places before the altar, where Dr. W. B. Hartzog performed the beautiful ring ceremony.

The bride, charming in a simple gown of sheer white and carrying a bride's bouquet of white daisies, entered on the arm of her father, who gave her in marriage. She was preceded by her two bridesmaids, her twin sister, Violet, gowned in lavender organdy, and her cousin, Louise Call, who wore a gown of sheerest yellow, also by her small niece, Jeanette Call, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Don Call of Lansing. The groom was attended by Harvey J. Sass of Grand Rapids and m. W. Van Putten, principal of the Mason high school. Ferns and pots of white daisies, chosen as being appropriate because of the bride's name, banked the altar rail before which the bridal party stood.

Following the ceremony, Miss Ruth Minar sang, "O Promise Me," after which the bridal party with relatives and friends returned to the Call home, where a two course dinner was served to about 50 guests. The house was beautiful with huge baskets of roses and myrtle scattered throughout the rooms.

The young people leave Monday morning for a month's sojourn in California, after which they will be at home with the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Call, until next spring.

Daisy ran for reelection as commissioner of schools but was defeated.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Thursday 6 July 1923

Fred E. Searl again became Ingham County's school commissioner, with the beginning of this week. He was elected last April, and took office last Monday morning. He succeeds Daisy I. Call-Bartley, Ingham County's first woman office holder, who has held this office for the past four years. Mr. Searl was also commissioner of Ingham County's schools previous to the latter's term of office, having served his county in that capacity for 12 years. Since his resignation in 1919 to assume the position of cashier in the First State and Savings bank here, Mr. Searl has also served as

manager of the Ingham county Farm Bureau, and during the past year has bought and sold hay and produce on private account.

Hugh and Daisy raised one son, William. Daisy remained very active in her community and church. According to the 1930 US Federal Census Hugh was listed as a World War I veteran. He taught agriculture at Mason High School from 1919 to 1940 and during the early 1940's also taught at Everett High School in Lansing. Hugh became an engineer and was employed at Oldsmobile, Lansing from 1945 until retirement in 1960.

Hugh, born 12 March 1894, Alma, Gratiot County, Michigan, died 30 June 1964, Mason, Ingham County. Daisy died 24 May 1975, Mason. She and Hugh were interred Maple Grove Cemetery, Mason.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Monday 26 May 1975

BARTLEY, MRS. DAISY I.

444 N. JEFFERSON, MASON

Age 80, died May 24, 1975 in a local hospital. She was born March 26, 1895 in Mason and had been a resident of the area all her life. She was the first woman County School Commissioner and a former school teacher, presently she was the president of the Women's Home in Lansing and was past president of the Masons Women's Club. She was a member of the First Baptist Church of Mason. Surviving are one son William Call Bartley of Rockville, Maryland, three grandchildren, a twin sister Mrs. Violet Hinkley of Mason. Memorial services were held Sunday evening at 7:00 p.m. from the First Baptist Church of Mason, with the Rev. Carl J. Grapentine officiating.

Dennis Benjamin was a local Lansing business man who felt rural young people were entitled to good education. He became one of the main proponents for consolidation in Meridian township. A business man, Dennis worked tirelessly to unit local school districts.

Dennis, son of Lyman (1839-1905) and Elizabeth M. (Brown) (1845-1914) Benjamin, was born 27 August 1878 or 1879, Eagle, Clinton County,

Michigan. Dennis stated on both his World War I draft registration and on his 1942 World War II draft registration that he was born in 1879. His obituary and his tombstone record his birth year as 1878. Dennis had no middle name. He stated this on the 1942 registration.

Dennis grew up on a farm. When he married Lela Grace "Grace" Heth 23 April 1902, Lansing, Ingham County, he was employed as a farmer. His World War I registration stated he was living in Okemos, Ingham County and was employed at Reo, Lansing, as a mechanic. By 1930 Dennis was working "proprietor of the Reo Sales and service" on Michigan Avenue, Lansing. Later he and Grace moved to Albion, Calhoun County, Michigan where Dennis had interests in real estate and selling automobiles. Dennis and Grace raised three children; Alice, Irma and Ronald.

Dennis was instrumental in helping organize the consolidation of Meridian Township schools into Okemos Consolidated School. He was listed as school director of District No. 6 in 1920 and President of the Okemos Memorial Association in 1922. The memorial association helped erect and monument to Chief Okemos.

The consolidation process was not an easy one. Dennis was, at one point, deposed from the governing board of District No. 6. He also became embroiled in a law suit over the public election process for consolidation. In 1920 he published a letter to the Editor of the State Journal stating his views on the consolidation.

Lansing State Journal (Lansing, Michigan) Wednesday 18 February 1920

## CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS.

Lansing, Feb 16

Editor State Journal:

There are ten school districts within a radius of five miles of Okemos all of which are going to vote on the consolidation in their territory with that of other contiguous territory in order that a rural agricultural school may be organized according to Act. 226, Public Acts of 1917, as amended, five of which have their election set for Saturday, Feb. 21. The following facts



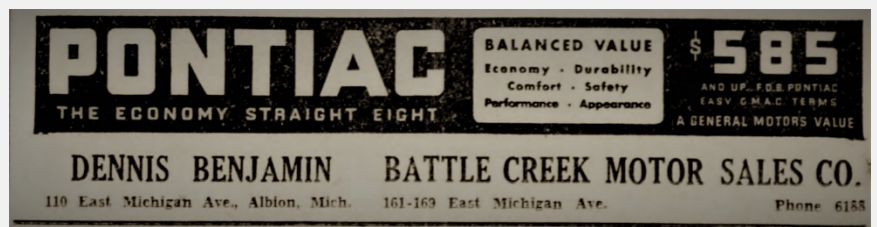
and figures obtained from the files of department of public instruction: It cost in 1918-19 to maintain these ten school districts, teaching to eight grades, the sum of \$9,628.71, to this must be added \$500 for tuition to outside school, making a total of \$10,128.71. There are in these schools an average daily attendance of 220 pupils which were taught to the eighth grade at a per capita cost of \$42.55. Now in the Mattawan Consolidated school of Van Buren county there are seven school districts having an average daily attendance of 206 pupils, schooled to 12 grades at a per capita cost of \$40.59 or \$1.94 cents less than our little one room district school, where we have from 15 to 32 per cent pass the eighth grade. Mattawan Consolidated school has \$1 per cent pass. These pupils are transported to and from school to their home, ours have to walk as far as two miles though all kinds of weather. In Mattawan school, the pupils all have an equal advantage to high school education regardless of their financial circumstances where exactly six per cent of our pupils ever get in to high school, the records show. The qualifications necessary to vote on this vital question: You must be parents or legal guardian of pupils enrolled in the school or taxpayers of property assessed for school taxes in your district. In addition to these qualifications you must be 21 years of age, a full citizen of the United States, and have resided three months in your district prior to the election. If you are entitled to vote don't fail to do so Saturday, Feb. 21, 1920, and give the pupils of our rural district an equal chance to high school advantages as have their city cousin and finish making life worth living on the farm with less expense to the taxpayers.

Dennis Benjamin

Dart Dist. No. 6

Battle Creek Enquirer (Battle Creek, Michigan) Sunday 10 August 1930

Dennis Benjamin, proprietor of the Reo sales and service, Michigan avenue, has taken over the Oakland and Pontiac agency from Walter Pratte. The new establishment will be known as the Re-Oakland-Pontiac sales. Mr. Pratte's future plans have not been announced.



Dennis also became involved with local school issues in Calhoun county.

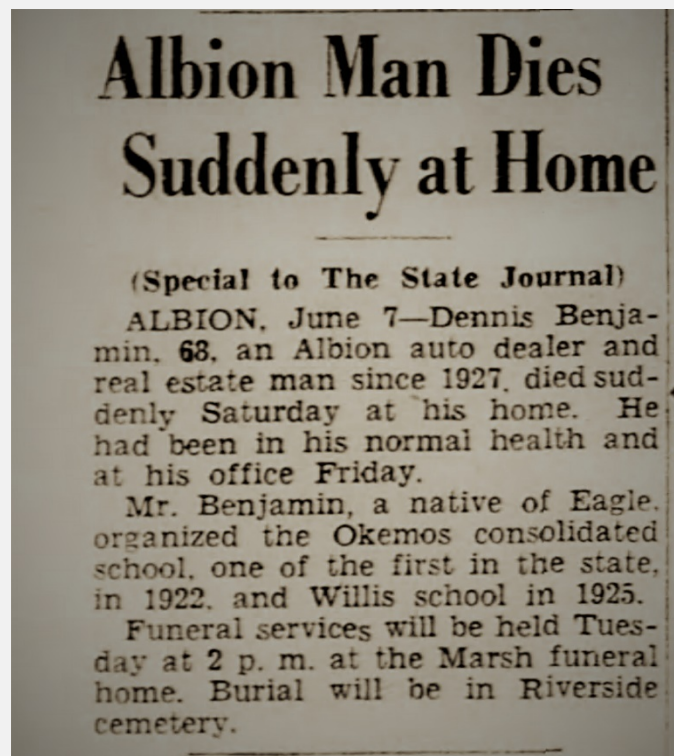
Battle Creek Enquirer (Battle Creek, Michigan) Monday 20 May 1939

Candidates File - Only four of the announced six candidates for election of the Albion board of education filed petitions with Secretary Carl M. Creager prior to the deadline, 5 p.m. Saturday. Everett C. Cavanagh, optometrist, and C. C. Llewellyn, insurance man, failed to file. Filing were: C. Reginald Smith, Union Steel Products Co. treasurer; Roscoe C. DeWeese, garage owner; **Dennis Benjamin, automobile dealer**; and L. F. Emigholtz, Union Steel Products Co. sales department employee.

Dennis died 7 June 1947, Calhoun County. Grace, born 1882, died in 1965. The Benjamin's were interred Riverside Cemetery, Albion.

Battle Creek Enquirer (Battle Creek, Michigan) Saturday 7 June 1947

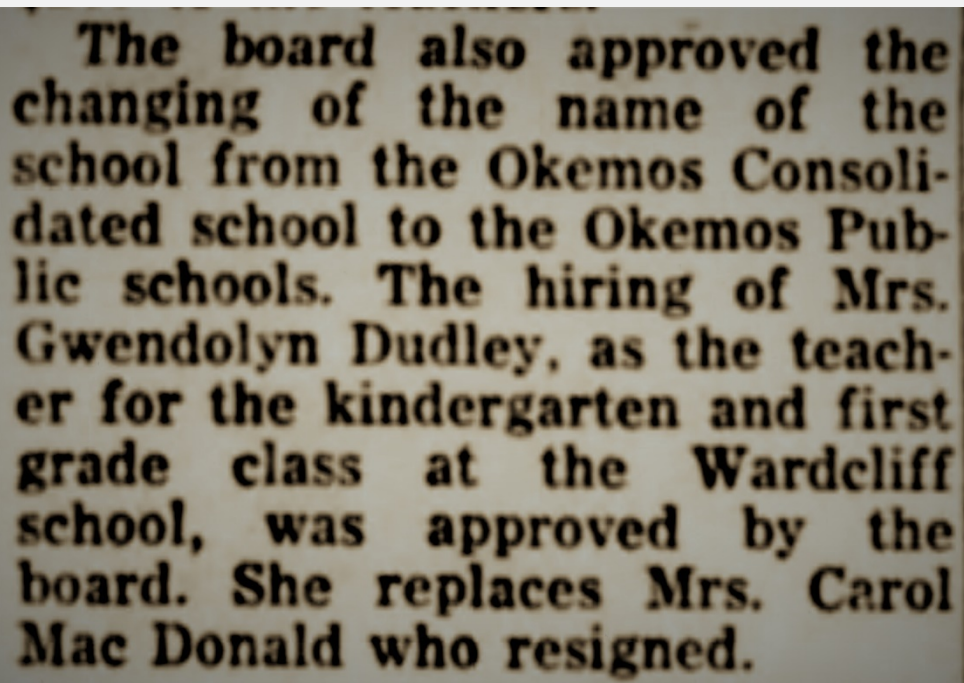
## DENNIS BENJAMIN



Albion - Dennis Benjamin, 68, automobile and real estate dealer here since 1927, died suddenly at his home at 423 Darrow at 9 a.m. today. He was born Aug. 27, 1878, at Eagle and was married April 23, 1902 to Miss Grace Heth. **In 1922 he helped organize one of Michigan's first consolidated school districts at Okemos** and three years later helped to organize a similar consolidation at Willis. Surviving are his wife; two daughters, Mrs. Alice

Hawkins of Marshall and Mrs. Irma George of Farmington; and a son, Ronald of Albion. Services will be held by Dr. Frederic S. Goodrich from the Marsh chapel at 2 p.m. Tuesday and burial will be in Riverside cemetery.

Lansing State Journal, Tuesday, December 20, 1955 reported:



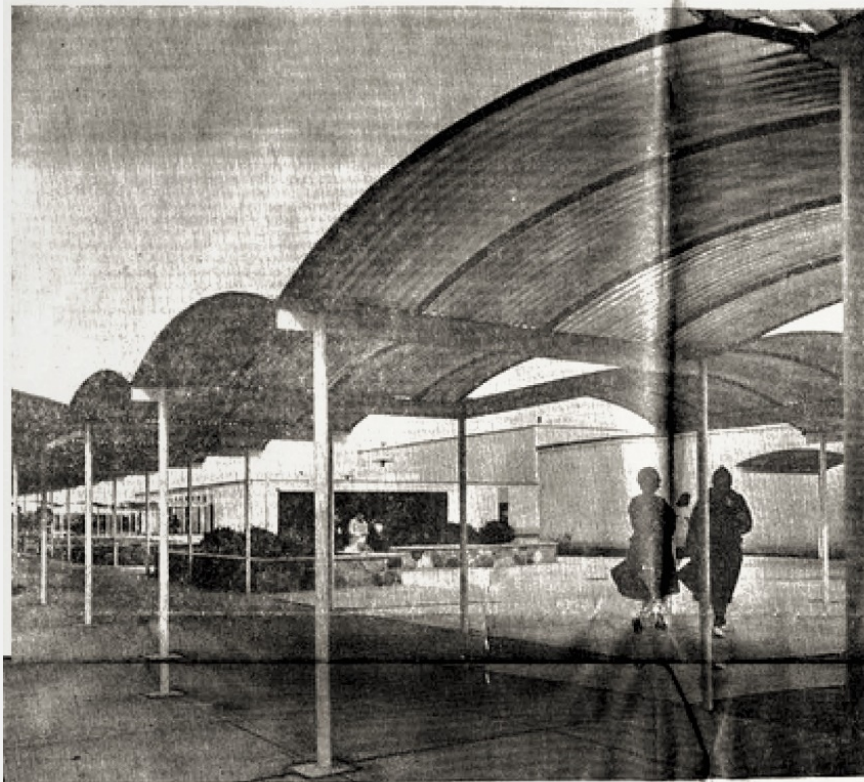
The board also approved the changing of the name of the school from the Okemos Consolidated school to the Okemos Public schools. The hiring of Mrs. Gwendolyn Dudley, as the teacher for the kindergarten and first grade class at the Wardcliff school, was approved by the board. She replaces Mrs. Carol Mac Donald who resigned.

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Every so often, one gets lucky doing historical research...the following article from The Meridian News Wednesday, January 12, 1961 is just such a gem. The "new" High School had just opened in the fall of 1960 with enthusiasm for the open campus style...then winter struck. Most students gritted their teeth and spoke highly of the new arrangement. The school was radical change from the past, and with perfect timing, The Meridian News documented the transition on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Okemos Consolidated / Public Schools. I'm reprinting the three articles in their entirety, then I will follow with the written repeat of the "Okemos Makes Remarkable Progress" since it pertains to the time period covered in this article and for the ease of reading.

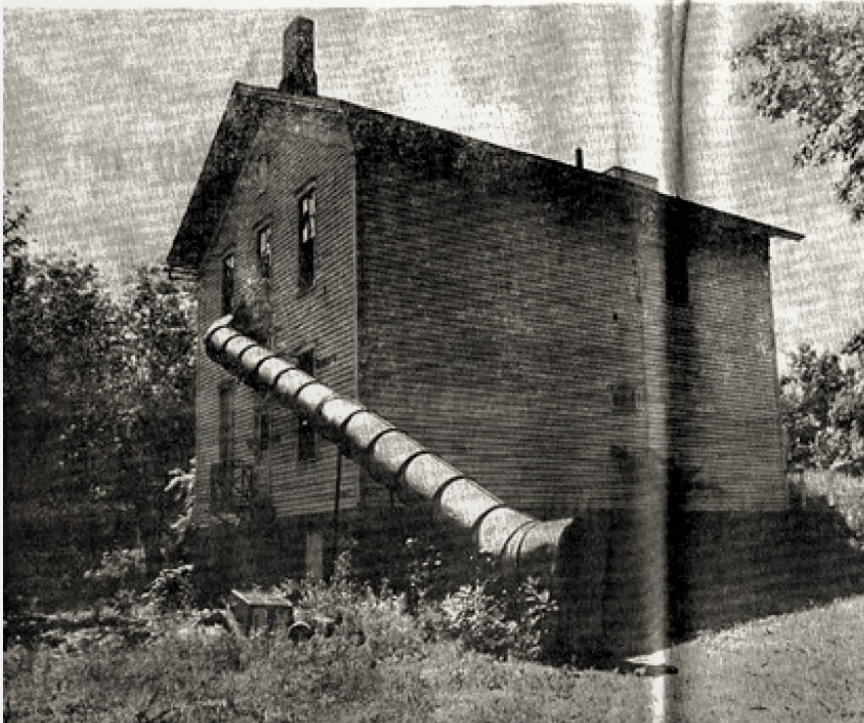


# 'Little' School Concept Designed For Student-Centered Curriculum



THE NEW is represented by the ultra-modern high school, built at a cost of roughly \$1,250,000. Utilizing new and modern architectural design, the school is built as a structure-cluster,

often called a campus plan building, which provides maximum square footage and versatility while offering close, personalized surroundings for students and teachers.



THE OLD was embodied in this building, until 1923 the site of the entire Okemos School System. Torn down in 1952 or 1953, it stood on the present location of the Okemos fire sta-

tion. It was a three-room building, built in 1870 at a cost of \$3,400, and was used as a school until 1949.

The concept of school-within-a-school, such as Okemos has, originated with educators who wanted a school plant that was designed around a student-centered rather than a subject-centered curriculum. Particularly was this true where large high schools were developing.

The little school is a part of the school-within-a-school program. It is as part of a larger high school with the advantages of a small high school in that attention can be paid to the individual student and his particular needs. Because it is part of a large high school, it has the advantage of a broad well-staffed program.

Students, usually about 300, representing all grades in the school, with their own teachers, work together in their own building group. Teachers in all the subject fields work together, with their small student group representing their common interest.

The program is developed around large blocks of time with one teacher who is then able to be a friend, counselor, and helper to each student in his group. Nonacademic subject content is mixed in with traditional fields of study, and all-teaching stations take on a laboratory atmosphere where the problem-solving approach is emphasized. For all-teaching, the problem-solving approach is emphasized for all teaching-learning processes.

There may be three or four such schools-within-a-school on one campus. Although the major portion of the school day for each student is spent with his own small group, all-school activities are planned which give each student the feeling of belonging to the school as a whole.

A few highly specialized subject areas are handled just as they are in a typical departmentalized organization. Unnecessary duplication of courses and facilities is avoided by integrated scheduling of some courses for students from all "schools."

Physical education facilities are generally shared by all, but such services as administration, counseling, library, lunchroom, and student government usually are developed on a small-school basis.

Architecturally, the school-within-a-school has many of the characteristics of the campus-plan school. Classrooms housing science, mathematics, art, English, homemaking, social science, and languages are grouped together in integrated build-

ing units instead of each subject field being housed in a separate building. The "school" units are related to one another and to the specialized units to form a functional and esthetically pleasing whole.

The housing implications of a school-within-a-school program are somewhat different from those of a subject-centered program. The philosophy of the school-within-a-school makes the individual student the focal point of interest and concern. The school plant itself must reflect this student accent if the program is to succeed.

If the total growth and development of the individual student is the center of interest, those responsible for guiding and instructing him must communicate about him as often as practical. Each teacher must learn to know each student he works with, not only from reactions he receives from his relationship with the student, but also in terms of other teachers' interpretations of his behavior and development. Teachers' interpretations of his behavior and development. Teachers and students must have as much contact as possible in and out of the classroom, yet each must have his share of privacy.

All the teaching stations serving the program for each small school must be interrelated so that there is a physical sense of unity among them. Industrial arts shops, usually set apart from the main group of buildings in a campus plan, are brought into the family group of classrooms. Administration and guidance and library services are made available within each small school.

Class scheduling is often reorganized from time to time to permit total student participation in special events or occasions. The staff of such a school cannot be a group of ragged individuals, each promoting his own specialized subject field as if it were the one valid hope of civilization. A combination of personnel screening and a well-planned and executed in-service training program is necessary to develop the faculty for a successful school-within-a-school program. This cannot be a program that begins and ends; it must be continuous.

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## Okemos Makes Remarkable Progress In Education During 100-Year History

Slightly more than a hundred years of history marks the growth of Okemos from a sparsely populated settlement to the present 7,000 population. Okemos has grown from a lonely home erected on the bank of the Red Cedar, where the Okemos Road bridge spans the river, to an expanded community in many areas.

In terms of education, Okemos has progressed remarkably during the past hundred years. The first cabin, built in 1844 by Daniel Young to be used for a copper shop, stands as the genesis of the present highly-expanded school system.

The first regular school house was erected in 1844 by George Mathews. The building, nothing elaborate, was 18 by 22 feet, made of oak and tamarack and sided up with whitewood. Here in this building the early teachers of Okemos school, such as Levi Avery, taught many of our children.

Two years later, in 1846, the first school house in Okemos, (Continued on Page 8)



# OKEMOS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF GROWS

The unusual increase in pupil enrollment and demand for more diversified educational services left their impact on the size of the Okemos teaching and administrative staff.

The rapid growth of the community, the location next to a big institution of higher learning, the new ideas and concepts in school administration demanded more specialized competence and better coordination of the programs.

Consequently the complex educational programs from K through 12 grades led the school to a new pattern of administrative structure at all levels and formation of channels for group

thinking.

The present administrative council of the Okemos Schools consists of Superintendent George H. Richards, High School Principal Joseph Arasin, Junior High Principal Edward Kiley, Wardcliff Principal Peter Wallis, Cornell Principal Richard C. Way, Coordinator of Instruction Joel Burdick, Coordinator of Services Evelyn VanBuskirk and Administrative Assistant Mohammad Toussi.

The administrative council beside individual leadership activities in their respective fields, are instrumental in the deliberation of educational schemes and coordination of instructional programs. They bring their problems to focus in the administration council meetings, held once a week under the direction of the superintendent.

From the council meeting come many of the plans and measures successful in solution of educational problems of the Okemos schools.

Joseph W. Arasin has been principal of Okemos High School since 1954. Arasin has taught at Monroe, the engineer's school at Port Belvoir, Va.; Catholic University of Washington, D. C.; and Okemos High School.

His bachelor's degree was received at Northern Michigan and his MA degree from Wayne State University.

Edward C. Kiley is in his second year as principal of Central School, after serving as assistant high school principal, guidance counselor, social studies teacher, seventh grade teacher, director of athletics teacher, and football coach with the Okemos schools.

Kiley has received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Michigan State University.

Richard C. Way has been principal of Cornell School since 1956 after serving as principal at Wardcliff and teaching fifth and sixth grades for four years in the Okemos schools. Way received his BS degree from MSU and is presently working on his MA degree at MSU.

Peter Wallis came to Okemos Schools in the fall of 1960, as principal of Wardcliff Elementary School having previously teaching in Kalamazoo, Dismantle, and the teacher education department at MSU.

He received his bachelor's degree at Western Michigan University, and master's degree at the University of Michigan, and is currently working on his doctorate at MSU.

George H. Richards has been superintendent of the Okemos schools for 10 years. He was previously high school principal, science teacher, physical education teacher, director of athletics and coach at Okemos High School.

Richards received his bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University, and is presently working on his doctorate in school administration at Michigan State University.

Joel Burdick is coordinator of instruction within the Okemos school system and has the responsibility of coordinating all instructional programs of the elementary, junior and senior high schools.

Burdick formerly taught at Plainwell, and Okemos Central school, and was principal of Central school and Director of Elementary Education at Okemos.

He received his bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University and his master's degree from Michigan State University. Presently, he is doing graduate work in the area of curriculum.

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Mrs. Evelyn Van Buskirk is coordinator of services and is responsible for the coordination of food services, building services, transportation and business services within the Okemos schools.

She has been with the Okemos schools since 1955 as secretary to the superintendent and office manager.

Mohammad Toussi has been with the Okemos schools since January, 1959, as an administrative assistant, on an internship program in school administration.

He received his AB degree from Tehran University, Iran, in 1954. In 1958, he received his MA degree from Central Michigan University.

Presently he is completing work on his doctorate degree in school administration at Michigan State University. His plans call for his return to Iran during the summer of 1961 where he will work in an administrative capacity in the ministry of education.

## Local Students Appear On Television Program

Local High School students appeared recently on the television program, "Saturday Society," a weekly one-hour live broadcast from the WMSE studios on the MSU campus. The program features two different high schools from the southern Michigan area each week. On December 17, Okemos and Haslett high schools were featured. Students from these two schools became part of the studio audience and participated in the actual production. They took part in contests, mixed dances, interviews, and many other activities during the program which is for and about teenagers.

## Commercial PRINTING

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# Okemos Makes Remarkable Progress

(Continued from Page 1)

known as Hamilton until 1857, was built on the location now occupied by the fire station. On this ground the Indians of Chief Okemos' band were accustomed to bury their corn. This small farm building, on to which additions were built from time to time, served the Okemos people until a new three-room was erected.

A frame school building was constructed in 1873, complete with furniture, for a cost of \$3,400. The building was about 30 by 50 feet in dimensions. At the time school was established on the basis of primary and intermediate, with a male teacher assigned to intermediate and a female teacher to primary.

Charles Hollister, Levi Soule, Wesley Emery and wife, professor Ingersoll of Michigan State Agricultural College were the early teachers who served in Okemos School during that period. Anson Hardy was the first school principal.

The Okemos Consolidated School was established in 1903 as one of the first rural agricultural schools in Michigan. At this time the present three-story building was constructed to house some 166 students.

Development and expansion of school proceeded slowly up to the end of the second world war. The only addition before World War II was the building service building erected in 1937. The fairly stable rate of growth was changed after the war when the subdivision development began. In 1948 a three-room unit was built, and in the following year the present Central Elementary school was completed at a cost of \$250,000.

In the fall of 1952, the four-room annex, now used by Junior high band and chorus, was built at a cost of \$36,900. The agricultural and shop building was added in 1954.

The rapidity of growth and expansion became discernible when two elementary schools, Wardcliff and Cornell, were built in 1955 at a cost of \$255,000.

Overcrowded conditions hit the schools again, causing additions to each. Wardcliff in 1956, and Cornell 1958. A change in the name of the school system to Okemos Public Schools was made in 1955.

The lack of adequate facilities for physical education and basketball necessitated the construction of a new, spacious gymnasium at Central School

which was completed in 1959.

The building program of the Okemos Public Schools was highlighted by the construction of a new campus style high school erected on Okemos Road one mile south of Mt. Hope - Okemos Road intersection. The construction of this one million, two hundred thousand dollar high school started in July, 1959, and was completed in September, 1960.

A quick look at the progression of school building reveals how Okemos public schools have duly and effectively met the challenge of quality education for a quickly expanding and progressive community.

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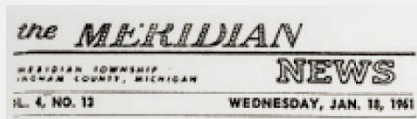
South Cedar — Holt, Michigan — OX 9-2128



I'll let you be the judge of the Meridian News article inserted. Wish I had access to all the issues of that paper! I remember thoroughly perusing as a kid every issue... It was stocked with tidbits! And I also remember one speaker coming to Okemos Baptist Church. The man's name was Chuck Roost. Somehow the Meridian News totally misconstrued Chuck's coming and advertised that the church was having a chuck roast dinner - with a picture included of a huge chuck roast! My mother was horrified, my Dad grinned and I thought it really funny. My mother didn't share the humor at all!!!!

The facts in the article agree with my sources, except for the Daniel Young "copper shop" which was a "cooper shop" where he made barrels.

Sherrie Paty Barber '66



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## Okemos Makes Remarkable Progress

### In Education During 100-Year History

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Editors Notes: references to “normal schools” is explained in an entry in Smithsonian magazine.

124 SMITHSONIAN.COM | January • February 2019

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**Why were teachers colleges called “normal schools”?**

**Lisa Frank** | Los Angeles

**THANK FRANCE;** the phrase is derived from “*école normale*,” which was used for institutions designed to instill standards of pedagogy and curriculum in teachers-to-be, says Debbie Schaefer-Jacobs, associate curator in the Division of Cultural and Community Life at the National Museum of American History. America’s first state-sponsored normal school opened in Massachusetts in 1839, at the urging of public-education champion Horace Mann; it is now Framingham State University. More arose through the mid-19th century, in parallel with the development of public schools, then called “common schools.” By the 1930s, however, most normal schools were calling themselves “teachers colleges.”

*Text by Anna Diamond*

*Daniel Youngs Cooper Shop, the first local school in Okemos 1844*



*The Okemos Library used to the 1950's and raised in the early 1960's*



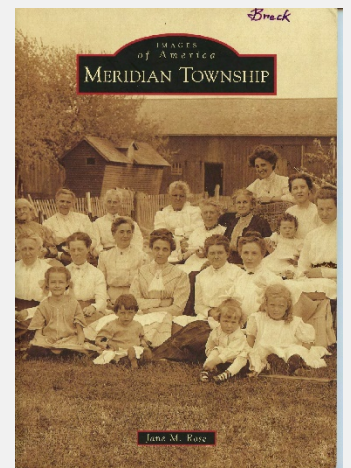
*Bennett School on the corner of Bennett and Hagadorn operated until all the rural schools were consolidated on to one central site in 1921.*



*The female soldiers participated in drills at patriotic events to the delight of the local residents. The Elementary School known as The Little School.*



*Okemos Consolidated School was opened in 1921. The first graduating class was 1923.*



*[Images of America: Meridian Township](#) by Jane Rose 2015. Images used throughout this article were reproduced with permission of Jane Rose. Click the book cover to read it online. Highlights and annotations within the book are by William Breckenfeld, Okemos Class of 1965.*