

## Bass River Township



**A One-Room School Enlarged to Four Classrooms and Modernized in All Respects.**

In any appraisal of the developments of the school system in Bass River Township during the past forty years, facilities and changed curriculum would probably be the most important factors.

The close of the nineteenth century found Bass River Township supporting four one-room schools: one in Frogtown, one in Leektown called Union Hill, one in Allentown called Squab Hill, and one in Mathistown. These schoolhouses had not been planned for the comfort or convenience of the occupants.

There were single windows here and there on three and even four sides. There was an entrance door at the front through which the teacher or an older boy must pass on his trip to the rear of the building for a scuttle of coal or an armful of slabs. The out-buildings were a goodly distance away and sometimes equipped with discarded catalogues.

The only facility for washing hands was a tin basin. A dipper, used by all for drinking, hung on the side of the water pail. The water was used sparingly as

the supply had been carried some distance from a neighbor's pump. It was necessary in winter to "catch" the pump before drawing water as, after each drawing, it was necessary to "trip" the pump to prevent its freezing. To wash the hands meant wet hands except to the girls who could, when no one was looking, dry them on the plentiful petticoats.

The iron stove stood in the center of the room. On wintry days the benches that at other times were used for recitations "up front" were placed around it. On these sat as many of the small children as possible in order to thaw out the icy forms filling their well-worn shoes—transportation had been by way of "Shank's Mare." On snowy days the smell of drying gaiters and stockings which had been worn over the shoes filled the air.

Books were provided by the parents and often handed down from one child to the other. Lessons were written with slate pencils on individual slates, which were cleaned with a piece of wet cloth or even the shirt sleeve.

In 1898, the present school building was erected and consequently the one-room ones closed. This new structure was comprised of two rooms, one of which was the old Squab Hill school-house. Later, a third and fourth were added, and the building brick veneered.

A hand bell "called school" and small tap bells called the classes "up front" for recitation. A second-hand organ furnished music for the "opening exercises."

Books were now furnished by the district. No longer did a child need to read the same book over and over because of insufficient supply.

Classrooms were overcrowded. Schedules, which called for nearly every subject daily, were divided into periods sometimes as short as ten minutes. Assignments were made page by page and everyone in the same class received the same assignment. Papers were marked on the percentage basis, much homework was assigned, and Donald Dumb, age 12, still remained in second grade.

Besides the noon hour there was a fifteen-minute play period morning and afternoon. The playground extended into the near-by woods and ice ponds as far as within hearing of the bell.

The toilets were behind the school building with a high board fence between.

A stove with a jacket to circulate the heat was placed in one corner of each room. Coal was still some distance away but a janitor was employed to keep the fire and "sweep up" after school.

A pump was installed in the cellar with a half-barrel to catch the drippings. The girls used the tin cup but the boys usually drank from the nozzle. When the half-barrel overflowed it was bailed out and the water was carried up the stairs to be emptied outside.

At Christmas time, the children spoke "pieces." Each room boasted a tree trimmed with pupil-made paper ornaments, popcorn, and cranberries.

Eighth grade graduations were held in the Methodist Church or in the Civic Hall. They were gala affairs. The girls wore long frilly dresses and the platform was decked with baskets of flowers.

For a short time because of an overcrowded condition a classroom was made in the second story at the head of the stairs. In 1926, a fourth classroom was built. The following year, a cafeteria was made in the basement. Each successive year has brought many improvements.

Later, a wing to the school building was built which provided inside toilets and a furnace room. Washing and drinking facilities were installed in the hall. Floors were oiled to help control the dust.

A stage was annexed and when it became necessary because of decreased enrollment to dispense with the services of one teacher the adjoining classroom was changed into an assembly room. Chairs were first borrowed from the Civic Association. Later, metal ones were purchased.

The assembly room now serves treble purposes: assemblies, music, and rest. The assemblies are varied; they may celebrate a holiday, culminate a unit of study, provide listening to "School of the Air," or present a movie given by the CCC Camp. The radio, victrola, and piano provide music opportunities. A near-by closet stores cots, sheets, and blankets for the daily rest period of the primary children.

Movable, individual desks and chairs have been provided for all children.

The second floor has been completely remodeled. It now consists of a library, a work room, a supply room, and a medical room.

A few years ago, the library had only three small open book cases. The books were crowded together unsystematically. Last year, the floor was covered with in-laid linoleum and enough metal shelving was purchased to provide for both present and future needs.

In the work room are shelves, rolls of brown paper, alphabet stamp sets, a table, a ditto machine, a paper cutter, a stapler, a large desk, and a typewriter. The Board of Education recently purchased a large table and twelve chairs to be used for library purposes and for holding their Board meetings. About two years ago an outside door was made for use as an exit for a future fire escape.



Top—Activities in School Auditorium  
Center—An Attic Converted to a Well Equipped Medical Room  
Lower—A Modern Library in Use



Pupils Enjoying a Properly Equipped Playground

The medical room contains a lavatory, a fully-equipped first-aid cabinet, a desk, a table, chairs, scales, and a hospital cot. Both doctor and nurse make weekly visits. The doctor is on call at all reasonable times. The nurse leaves her plans with the principal each week so that the health work goes on throughout the week. Necessary home visits are made by the nurse.

The lunchroom, which is still in the basement, is no longer carried on in cafeteria style. Upper grade girls are learning correct ways to serve; balanced menus are prepared; dishes, tumblers, silverware, napkins, and other supplies are provided; and proper table etiquette is practiced.

A few years ago the school building was brick-veneered and later shrubs were planted on the school grounds.

Swings, see-saws, horizontal bars,

jungle gym, basketball standards, sand box, ball diamond, and large painted hollow blocks provide varied ways of carrying on a well organized play period.

Yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily plans are made by the children and teachers. The daily classroom programs include: preparation, committee duties, use of educational toys, research, reports, discussion, evaluation, drill, rest, and recreation of various types. Rules for various occasions are formed and daily diaries are kept. "Readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic" have not faded into the background—but on the other hand, have found their legitimate places as necessary tool subjects by which the child expresses himself more fully adequately.

Thus, changed facilities, and changed curriculum have placed the New Gretna School on the list of modern schools in the true sense of the words.