

# SELHS News

*Newsletter of the Sterling Eureka and Laketown History Society*

Volume 7, No.1

Memory Room – Cushing Community Center

Jan, 2013

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Website <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wiselhs/>

## One room Lanesdale Country School hosts Museum

by Marie Dissmore

Lanesdale School located east of Cushing is one of the many country schools dotting the countryside of Polk County. Many residents have fond memories of the country schools attended by friends and neighbors still living in Polk County.

Howard Jorgenson taught at the Lanesdale Country School from 1932-1941 and enjoyed his years

there working with children. He grew up on a farm near Luck in the Ivers Mountain region and attended the Oak Hill Country School. After high school in Luck he attended Polk County Normal School in St. Croix Falls for one year, and taught at another country school before accepting the teaching job at Lanesdale.

The school was organized in 1874. The school as a log building which

was later moved to the Viggo Sorenson farm which now forms part of the existing farmhouse. The second, a white frame building was constructed in the 1880s. The contract to build the school was for \$450. the first teacher was Euphemia Densmore.

The Lanesdale school was located two miles East of Cushing off of County N on a little town road in a quiet country side. The school had no electricity so when it came time for Christmas programs the people brought their lanterns and hung lighted candles on the Christmas tree. One year the boy who was playing Santa Claus got too close to the candles and his beard caught on fire.

Later the school board decided to have electricity installed during the depression, the light company told them it would be quite expensive to run the lines out that far. The parents all got together and did the work themselves, putting in the poles and stringing the lines. The women helped out by cooking meals in the school for the workers. The undertaking turned out to be an enjoyable time of working together and socializing as well. "We didn't have much money, but we had great cooperation," Jorgenson said.

To climax the work, a PTA meeting was held one evening, the lights were turned on, a special time for everyone to see the lights.

"We had a pretty good population of youngsters in the area, as everyone lived on big farms and we had all eight grades," he said, "we had as many as 30 or more kids at a time." Howard taught the three R's which included the phonics method for reading.

Days were long for a teacher then as it was his duty to start the fire in

the morning, which meant leaving home by 5 a.m. He started out as a single man, living at home with his parents, the Verne Jorgenson's, and had to walk since there were no snow plows, which meant the roads were drifted over. One day when it was 30-40 below, while he was walking past a farm, Antone Nelson, came out and hollered, "Come in Howard and have a cup of coffee." Howard said it was the best coffee he ever tasted. There was a rule in those days that if five kids showed up they had to have school, so those days they just had "fun days". His salary was \$65 a month in those days.

The school was located in a hilly area. There were some good sledding hills for the children to enjoy their skis and sleds during recess time. One day the boys came in and said, "Mr. Jorgenson, we found a new ski hill. Come out and try it." Taking his skis, he followed the boys to the new ski hill in a pasture. Looking down he saw the slope was almost straight down, with two trees at the bottom of the hill where the track went right between.

"I made it down the hill through the trees," he explained, "but past them was a big log laying across the path. My skis hit the log and I went flying through the air and landed in a big snow bank." The boys then came running to see if their teacher was all right. Howard got up and said, "Well, boys, time to get back to school."

Using the outdoor pump, the kids poured buckets of water on the sledding hills to make the hill slipperier for sledding. "We didn't have the clothing we have now, but we all had fun in the snow, and the girls came out to play along with the boys."



The Lanesdale Country School now resides at Balsam Lake as museum.

which had a bubbler for drinking.

In the late '30s they started a hot lunch program by putting on a kettle of soup which they ate with their sandwiches from their lunch pails.

There were the two little

outhouses with a path to each, for the bathrooms. There was a bell to ring and a flag which was always put up every morning and taken down at night and the pledge to the flag was recited each morning.

When it came time to practice for

the Christmas program, Hannah Nelson and Mrs. Erickson took turns coming to play the pump organ for the singers. Later the PTA raised money through raffles, cake sales and pie socials to purchase an upright piano.

One evening Howard was invited to a party out in the country where they played some games. He kept noticing a good looking young lady across the room named Catherine Schauls, so he said, "I got the courage to ask her if I could take her home." She accepted and he drove her home in his Whippet Roadster, and then they began dating, and were married in 1935. They rented a house in Cushing for eight dollars a month and had to carry water from the neighbors as there was no indoor plumbing.

The majority of the people were Scandinavians, the Larson's, Olson's, Ellefson's, Brenholdt's, Berg's, Hanson's and Lundgren's were some of the names in the school. The county superintendent Kenneth Outcalt came out once a year, and supervising teachers, Elsie Chell, Ida Ooley and John Nelson came out every six weeks or so. Their job was to check out how things were going, then write a report which was sent to the school board.

Standardized tests were given to all country school students. The results were then recorded in the County

Education Office which were compared with others students in country schools. Jorgenson explained, we didn't want to be at the bottom of the totem pole so we all worked hard to try to put our school towards the top.

The students also had duties such as dusting the erasers, washing the black boards and carrying in the firewood for the furnace in the basement which took a lot of wood. Students took turns pumping water from the outside pump and carrying it to the basement to the cooler

(See Cushing School, page 4)

Some rules for female teachers in 1915 were: You are not to keep company with men, you may not loiter downtown in any of the ice cream stores, you may not dress in bright colors, you may not dye your hair, your dresses must not be any shorter than two inches above the ankle.

Over the years there were 36 different teachers who stayed one or two years, with the exception of Howard Jorgenson who stayed nine years. He then went to River Falls and Superior for summer school to completed his masters, later becoming an elementary principal at Luck. Mrs. Sylvia Lindberg was the last teacher at the Lanesdale Country School that closed in 1961. The school house was moved to Balsam Lake in 1964 to be used as a school museum to preserve the example of the one-room country school.



Howard Jorgenson, age 87 who taught at Lanesdale Country School from 1932 thru 1941.

# Don't Quote Me, But . . .

'A Sporadic Standard-Press Column — By R. E. V.J

One of the last of the country schoolhouses in Polk County was the Laketown Dist. 3 Lanesdale school, which has since been preserved as the "typical one-room schoolhouse" at Balsam Lake by the Polk County Historical Society.

But memories of the school, which date back even before this building was erected were jotted down over 20 years ago by a former teacher at the school, the late Mrs. Anton Nelson, (formerly Hannah Wallin).

Miss Sylvia Erickson, also formerly a teacher at the Lanesdale school, brought this article to us, explaining that Mrs. Nelson had written it in about 1945, for the youngsters who attended the school "because she wanted them to know a little more about what the school had been like in the old days."

The Lanesdale school, according to the histories, was organized in Laketown district 3 in 1874, when a log school house was built, and the first teacher was Euphemia Densmore. The log building was later moved to a nearby farm, and is now part of the Viggo Sorenson home. The second building on the site, which was moved to Balsam Lake as a school museum in January, 1964, was erected in the 1890's, we're told.

The Lanesdale school integrated with Luck in 1957 (there was quite a discussion at the time as to whether the school should integrate with St. Croix Falls or with Luck), and the one-room school was operated until 1961 when it was discontinued.

Miss Erickson tells us that the Lanesdale school stood in a lovely, rolling countryside where "the youngsters had the best times" playing cops and robbers, sledding and sliding, on the hillsides, ravines and ponds. The school was located off county road N, 1½ miles east of Cushing and a half-mile north.

There were as many as 82 pupils in the one-room school at the time Mrs. George Hanson, of Cushing, taught there in 1910-12. (She was then Emma Erickson).

The teacher before her was Mrs. Alert Larson, then Lily Peterson, who taught there in 1908, right after graduation from the Normal school. She tells us she had 72 pupils and "you could hardly walk through the aisles for all the boots and rubbers and lunch buckets."

Other teachers there were Marion Nelson (1913-14), Hazel Torgerson (1915), Bertha Anderson (1916), and Esther Hammerstrom (1918). One of the longest-term teachers was Howard Jorgenson, who taught from 1932 to 1940, according to a list from the Polk County Historical Society.

Others were Florence Burnstead, Mrs. Eugene Jensen, Jeanette Ditlefsen, Mrs. Arne Erickson, Mildred Glassel, Mrs. Helen Chase, Mrs. Elaine Jensen, Elsie Wicklund, Helen Fischer, Mrs. Virginia Larson, Loretta Kuhl, and Mrs. Sylvia Lindberg, who was the last Lanesdale teacher, after the district integrated.



Miss Erickson, who brought us this picture of the Lanesdale school, tells a story about that belfry. The teacher in those days, she said, came a considerable distance by horse and buggy, riding with her boyfriend. One morning a couple of boys got to school much earlier than usual and climbed up into the belfry. The teacher rode up with her friend and as they were saying "fond farewells" never dreaming that any students might be around, the boys gave the school bell a hearty clang. The boys climbed down and ran, fast as they could go, and the teacher never discovered who the peepers were.

Here is the story, "My First School Days", of that first log school at Lanesdale, written by Mrs. Anton Nelson in the '40's:

"Some sixty years ago I went to school in a little log building which stood on the same site as the present school house. It had two small windows on each side of the building; the blackboards were made of boards that were painted black and very rough. We used cloth to erase the writing, and it raised a cloud of dust when the blackboards were being wiped off! No one ever heard of dustless crayon in those days. We also had homemade seats; the school was heated by a box stove, and at noon we used to sit around it thawing out our bread by placing it on top of the stove, and it used to be entirely covered with bread slices! The room was very cold, so our lunches would freeze standing around on the floor.

"In those days, no matter how many children went from one home, the lunch was carried in one pail and the size of the pail would have to compare with the number of children going to school from that family. I know of instances where the lunch was carried in a small milk pail! There would often be a quarrel—if not a fight—over who should carry the lunch pail. Each child always brought a bottle of milk to drink.

"There were practically no settlers between our home and the school house. No public roads. We had a trail blazed through the wilderness; we usually had only five months of school during the year, and it started in the first part of November.

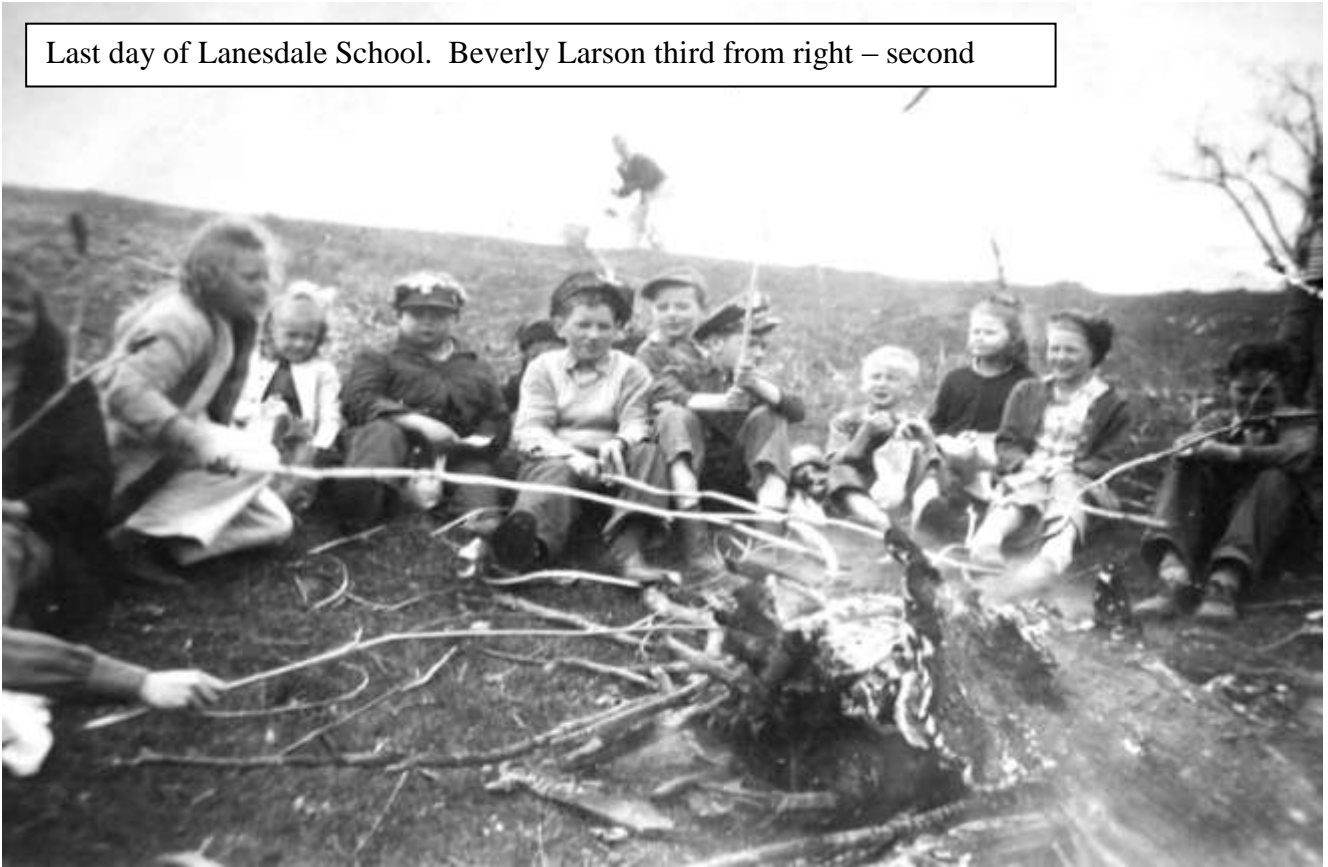
"The teacher would call school by pounding on the window sash with a ruler or something of that sort. It often happened that the children would wander off into the woods, so they would not hear the call. Then there would be punishment in store—such as having his or her hands tied with a strap to the window casing, or making a boy sit in the same seat with a girl! The games played were "pump, pump, pull away", "drop the handkerchief" or "anti, anti over". This last game was a favorite with the little folks, as the school house being so low, it was easy for them to throw a ball over it!

There was a large reading chart for the new beginners. They would stand in a row before this chart and generally read in unison. Glad they were when they could take up the First Reader! We only had one set of readers, so when we were through with a book, if we were not capable of proceeding to the next higher book, we would have to commence over again in the beginning, sometimes going through the same book several times—almost committing it to memory! Let me state that the books of those days were not so interesting as our books of today!

"Besides reading, we studied arithmetic, spelling and geography. These were the only subjects taught at that time. Some years later, history and grammar were added and as the years went on other studies were added. All the books had to be purchased by the parents, as the District did not furnish free textbooks. We had no library books, and it was many years before the school even had a dictionary. We had no writing paper of any kind except the so-called copy books, used in our writing exercises. We used slates for all written work and it sure was some noise when the teacher told us to go to work, and all our slates came up on our desks at once!

"The boys wore moccasins on their feet and had to wear two or three pairs of heavy woolen stockings inside of them. The girls wore home-knit all wool stockings in their shoes, and also a pair of stockings outside of their shoes. In a very short time the heel of the shoe would wear through the stockings, so it took much knitting and mending to keep the children supplied. The wool was sheared from the sheep, carded, spun, and knit or woven into garments! We wonder how it was possible for the mothers to do all this. We did not know what overshoes were; they were not to be had at the stores. All the clothing was made at home, for both every day and dress-up, as nothing ready-made was to be had in the little country stores."

Last day of Lanesdale School. Beverly Larson third from right – second



Lily Peterson (Mrs Alert Larson) taught at the Lanesdale School 1908 to 1910. This is her class. She is the teacher in the center back. Stanley Larson is second from the right in the front row.



Lanesdale School 1942 Back: Bud Larson, Bernice Nelson, Agnes Glassell, ?, Corrine Hallberg, Mary Ann Miller, Orlon Ellefson, Irma Nelson, Lois Ellefson, middle: Bobby Fassett, Front: Donald Nelson, Bev Larson, Margie Ellefson, Mary Lou Ellefson



**Note the bare feet! Most photos from Bev Larson Medvec**



## From the President

January 24<sup>th</sup>, noon at the Pizzeria in Dresser, WI is the Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical Society Christmas party! We chose to wait until after the Christmas rush to when we were getting cabin fever in January. Just show up ready to visit! Order what you want and pay for your own lunch. Hope to see you there!

We had our fall election of officers in October and re-elected the same group as last year. I tried to pass along the president's job, but as no one chose to run, I am back for a second year. Maybe this time I will figure out what to do!

It has been a busy year for my wife Margo. This summer she learned she had breast cancer and since August has been undergoing treatment. The chemotherapy ends this week, and then she will have surgery and radiation through the spring of 2013. Things are going well, and we are expecting everything to be clear by summer. In the meantime there have been many trips to the doctor and treatments in Rochester at Mayo Clinic. We are staying at our Pine Island MN home during the treatment, making trips to Cushing when time permits.

2013 promises to be a busy year with us joining in for Memorial Day events, the Sterling Picnic, Cushing Fun Days, and putting on the 8<sup>th</sup> annual River Road Ramble. This year, the local Swedish club is celebrating Midsummer Day at the Cushing Community Center and we will assist with this too.

We have two rooms in the community center as our Memory Rooms. We hope to have them open more often for local events and by appointments and add more local items to display. Please think about us if you have items of local history to loan or donate.

We had a good 2012 participating in many events and ended the year financially sound. We made one decision—not to apply for an official 501c3 non-profit status. We are a non-profit organization and were chartered under the Polk County Historical Society. We no longer can be a sub-chapter, so had to decide if we needed to apply for our own registration. The advantage would be that if someone gave us a donation of more than \$250 they could write it off on their taxes. We tabled doing the application with the idea that if we changed our mind in 2013 or the future, we could still apply. In the meantime, we continue to operate just as we have for the past 12 years.

We are always looking for volunteers, donations, artifacts, photos, and records to make the group and the museum better. The current group of volunteers is excellent and we have been quite active. So if you have an interest and some time or some money please consider joining in our efforts to preserve local history in our immediate area! Happy New Year! Russ Hanson



An old damaged photo of the Lanesdale school. Unknown date and people. Maybe the clothing can give us a hint of the date. Are knickers 100 years old?

**Elected Officers and Board Members  
Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical  
Society November 2011**

Chair - Russ Hanson  
2558 Evergreen Av, Cushing, WI 54006  
(715) 488-2776 (507-356-8877 Jan-Feb)  
russhanson@grantsburgtelcom.net

Vice-chair - Mark Johnson  
St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

Secretary/Treasurer - Donna Blair  
St. Croix Falls, WI 54006

Emeritus Chair – Marcie Marquardt  
[quietmeadows@lakeland.ws](mailto:quietmeadows@lakeland.ws)

Executive Board Members  
George Laier, Russ and Dottie Adams,  
LeRoy and Marlys Hedberg, Joan Swanson,  
Justin Swanson, Marcie Marquardt (I think!)

**Order a book from SELHS  
Postage included in price**

\$13 A History of Making Maple Syrup  
\$18 St Croix River Road Ramblings 2010  
\$18 River Road Ramblings 2011  
\$18 The St Croix River Road  
\$18 History of Cushing Wisconsin I  
\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley I  
\$18 Stories of the Trade River Valley II  
Check to SELHS, Box 731, Cushing, WI  
54006

All profits go to SELHS to preserve local  
history. Or go to Amazon.com and order.

Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of each  
month at 7:00 pm at the Cushing  
Community Center Back Entrance  
No Meetings December, January and  
February, March

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Dresser, WI is the Sterling Eureka and  
Laketown Historical Society Christmas  
party!**

The Polk County Genealogical society is at  
the Luck Museum the second and fourth  
Mondays of each month from noon until 3  
pm. They will help you do research on your  
family history. No charge and no  
appointment needed. Email us at  
polkgen@gmail.com and check our website at  
[www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wipolk/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~wipolk/)

*Do you have an email address? If so, send it  
to [SELHSCUSHING@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SELHSCUSHING@GMAIL.COM) and we  
will keep you up-to-date on what is happening  
with regular releases and send our  
newsletters directly and in color!*

*SELHS is working together with the Sterling  
Picnic committee to help celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup>  
annual Sterling Old Settlers Picnic. This will be  
on Sunday June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Cushing Community  
Center—noon potluck. A special program will  
celebrate the past 75 years*

*We are also putting together a book  
commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> picnic and are looking  
for old photos of the Sterling picnic and area as  
well as short family histories and photos to  
include! They must be into Russ Hanson by Feb  
15<sup>th</sup> of 2013! See address in the President's  
column. If you are from the area or your  
ancestors, don't miss out in getting your family  
included!*

**Summary Treasurer's Report 2012  
Donna Blair**

<b>Income:</b>	<b>Book sales:</b>	<b>\$910</b>
	<b>Memberships</b>	<b>495</b>
	<b>Donations</b>	<b>180</b>
	<b>Ramble Ads</b>	<b>80</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1665</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
	<b>Postage</b>	<b>\$120.09</b>
	<b>Copies</b>	<b>274.44</b>
	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>244.40</b>
	<b>Printing Books</b>	<b>158.60</b>
	<b>Post Office Box</b>	<b>48.00</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$845.53</b>

2012 balance plus \$819.47

**Total at end of 2012 in savings and checking \$7923.51**

## Sterling Eureka and Laketown Membership Form

Send completed form to

**SELHS.**  
**P.O. BOX 731**  
**Cushing WI 54006**  
**(LOOK AT THE**  
**DATE AFTER**  
**YOUR NAME**  
**On mailing label**  
**For the last time you**  
**Joined (i.e. 2011)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Membership Levels

Individual	Student	Life (ind or couple)
\$10.00	\$5.00	\$100.00

All memberships in excess of \$10 as well as any additional donations to the SEL Historical Society are fully deductible.



The Lanesdale School was located east of Cushing. It is now in Balsam Lake, WI, a part of the Polk County Historical Society Museum

**January 24<sup>th</sup>, noon at the Pizzeria in Dresser, WI is the Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical Society Christmas party! Please join us!**

**Cushing, WI 54006**

**Box 731**

**SELHS**