

SELHS News

Newsletter of the Sterling Eureka and Laketown History Society

Volume 7, No.3

Memory Room – Cushing Community Center

July, 2013

Email selhscushing@gmail.com

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

The Evergreen Community

A Country School Teacher

Maggie Orr taught her first term at the Sunrise Ferry School, on the Wisconsin bank of the St Croix River, not far from where she was raised, in Sterling Township. She was just 17 years of age. This is her story:

It was September 1, 1889. I had finished the country school not far from my home and had attended grammar school for two terms to prepare for teaching. I applied for a little school about 11 miles from my



Picture: After voters failed to get the majority vote to move the Sunrise Ferry School to the Evergreen community a few miles to the north, they took matters into their own hands, dismantling the log school and moving on their own. We don't know which site it is at in this picture sent to us from Hugh Blair. Hugh's mother is in the 1907 photo.

home called the Sunrise Ferry School. It was near the ferry on the St. Croix River, which took folks over into Minnesota where they could go to the little town of Sunrise a mile or more from the river.

The families there were mostly Swedish and none wanted to board the school Ma'am. I rented a small room in the Martinson home one and one-quarter miles from school for \$1 a week and furnished my own food. I could make tea or coffee on their kitchen range if I wished.

The schoolhouse was a hewn-log construction about 16 feet x 20 feet, which was banked all around with dirt for the winter season. There was a big iron box stove three feet long at the north end that burned jack pine wood pieces two feet long.

The teacher's desk was homemade, two feet by three feet, with a kitchen chair for a seat. The blackboard was four wide

boards painted black and nailed against the wall. There were 10 long seats with a long desk in front of each made of unpainted lumber. The lower ones were in the front for the smaller children and the larger ones in the back.

There was a long bench on which to set the dinner buckets and the pail of drinking water carried from a neighbor's farm about one-half mile away. Two long benches in the front of the room were for recitation classes. There was an alarm clock for timing and a bell for calling the children in from recess. The water to clean the school once a month was carried from the river, and I was the janitor.



The 38 children were of ages 5 to 17. The majority were from real old country Swedish families. The women spun their own wool and made their own clothing. The children had more than one pair of home-knit stockings to wear in their wooden shoes, which were lined up outside and were brought inside for the cold months.



From the November 20, 1913 *Standard-Press*: "Miss Lucy Orr, a school teacher near Grantsburg, while on her way to school last week, killed a Jack Rabbit that weighed 13 pounds."

The food in the tin dinner pails was mostly bread and meat, (or lard with plenty of salt sprinkled on it), was frozen nearly every morning in November on the way to school and often the drinking water also. Then children wore homemade footwear, moccasins, etc., but mostly

sheep hide with wool inside for warmth and comfort.

There were four Indian (half breed) children in moccasins who were eager and quick to learn. They expressed a great liking for me and I returned that affection. I loved all my pupils and never had any trouble, even with the older ones.

Perhaps I should mention that head lice was very prevalent in those days and I had to send notes home to parents with the suggestion that they might try kerosene in which to wash the children's hair.



The subjects taught were arithmetic, reading, spelling, language, writing, geography and constitution. The students ranged from the ABC class to a class of several who studied lessons from my own books. Those days most eighth graders didn't move on; they stayed and used the teacher's books.

I walked the one and three-quarter miles to school and back to my room Monday through Friday, with some of the children joining me as I went along through the woods. On Friday afternoon I walked the 11 miles to my home. I wore long skirts, high-buttoned shoes and never less than two petticoats. The first six miles were through heavy, dark, yellow-pine country with just a narrow

wagon road and red sand almost ankle deep. There was no chance to walk outside the road because of brush and stickers.

I saw squirrels, rabbits and beautiful deer but not a living soul and I tried to hurry along to reach home before dark. The last five miles there would be a farmer's house every mile or so. When snow came in November my father or a brother came for me on Friday with a big team of horses and sled. Sunday they took me back with enough food to last a week.

During this month, I would, with help from the largest boys, keep a big pile of wood inside on which to dry our wet clothing after walking to school. We always carried extra things to wear when we arrived. Some of the older boys walked ahead through the three to five feet of snow to try to make a track for me and others. There were no plowed roads and the weather many Novembers was 30 degrees below zero. Then I wore heavy-lined skirts, not less than three yards around the bottom, several petticoats and heavy boots. I kept an extra all-wool petticoat at the school to put on when I reached there after going through snow and ice almost to my knees. I let the children out at 3:30 then because some lived two miles away.

The first year we had school in September, October and November, and then vacation and school again for April, May and June. I received \$25 per month. My second year at Sunrise I received \$27.50 per month and taught seven months.

The Martinson family, with whom I stayed the year before, had moved so I went to the Joe Lundquist home farther from school. I had a nice little room with a south window, a bed frame and a small table. My

corn-husk mattress just filled the three-quarter-size bunk. I paid \$1.50 per week, boarded myself and was very happy. But there were times, at night, when a mother would sing Swedish lullabies to a baby that I would feel lonely. I did learn to understand, to speak and even to sing in Swedish while living with those families.

My third year there in 1891-1892, I received \$30 per month for eight months, which was much more than the average teacher was getting. That year I boarded with the Lundquists for \$10 per month. I averaged between 32 and 40 children of all ages in the Sunrise Ferry School.

The first little log school at Sunrise Ferry, the friendly people and the love of all my students there gave me the happiest memories of all my teaching years.



1934 Teacher Ray Thompson Lila and Vernon Carnes, Jim Blair, Lois Finch, Ruby Thomas, Harry, LeRoy, Paul, Kenny and Eugene Schowalter, Dorothy, Donald and Lawrence and Lyle Finch. Alberta Hanson is 3rd from the left in the back row.

Alberta Hanson—Evergreen Student

Alberta Hanson, who lives on the east end of Evergreen Avenue attended Evergreen School in the 1930s. She often rode horse from her home on Cole Creek (the old Blair homestead, now owned by the Chappelars).

Her parents, Eugene and Nettie Carnes Hanson, moved to the area when the Great Depression hit and they sold their good farm to get out of debt for the new house built after a fire.

The Carnes homesteaded along the St Croix and although most of them moved away later, the Clarence Carnes family ran the Sunrise Ferry, and Grandpa and Grandma Nancy Carnes still had their homestead.

Evergreen, the community that had sprung up in the 1870s with the first settlers, had disappeared by the turn of the century as wheat farming on the sandy land failed with drought and the thin top layer over the sand wore out and began to blow away.

A brief revival came with the depression; folks who lost their homes and farms retreated to squat in the empty houses left behind, or to pay \$50 for 40 acres to Polk County for land sold for failure to pay property taxes.

Nestled along the lower creek bottoms, with the whole Sterling Barrens free range for cattle (farmers fenced in their fields), people hunkered down and made modest living. By the 1940s with the WWII, jobs were again available, crop and livestock prices increased and again the Barrens emptied.

Alberta remembers the desperation of some of the neighbors. Fred Parker who hung himself because he couldn't stop his

drinking; Mr. Adams who hung himself because his mail-order bride began running around with the moonshiners; Granddad Brown who came to live for the winter with them asking for room and board and a little for his pipe tobacco in return for helping on the farm; the old man who was found frozen to death with a trail of dripped honey from the bedside table to his mouth—probably the last effort he could make to dip his hand into the honey jar and try to eat a little.

At the same time, the Evergreen school was the focus of community events; the school programs, the teacher who boarded with parents; and the daily walk or ride to school in the pleasant spring and fall and often frigid winter rides.

“I would much rather have walked the 3 ½ miles back and forth each day. But, if you got a ride or rode a horse, the district paid a small transportation fee to the parents, and in those days every cent counted!

Shopping was to Wolf Creek, to Cushing or across the Ferry to Sunrise. Cream went to Cushing or to the railroad just north in Burnett County at Randall.

Evergreen School District No. 4
Sterling Township
 SW Corner Section 15
1856-1940 Consolidated with Cushing

School was first held in a log shanty belonging to William Trimmer; this was fixed up to use as a school house and district 1. was formed, in 1856. Fannie Trimmer was the first teacher. In later years, district No. 1 became District no. 4 and in 1914, the log shanty was replaced by a more up-to-date building. Marcia Anderson taught the last term in the log school house. This was the last log school house school in Polk County.



The last log school house in Polk County was the Evergreen school which was formed in 1856, from a log house that was fixed up to be used as the school.

The frame building was built in 1914. The year of 1928-29, there were eight students. School was held from September 4-May 1. In 1929, 11 students were enrolled; in 1930, there were fifteen students, with 158 days being taught.

There was a Halloween social for a benefit for the school(stove, curtains, oilcloth, hot lunch and some things for picnic), on October 31, 1930. Picnic and last day of school was April 28, 1931.

School was taught for 176 days in 1941 with 23 students enrolled. The teacher's report read:

School ground area: 2 acres
 wood floors, 9 windows
 Heated by room Heater
 (Waterman Waterbury)
 2 toilets-Outside
 Only Playground Equipment:
 Merry-go-round
 Water Fountain: Bubbler
 Musical Instrument: Organ
 Lights: 1 Aladdin Lamp

Roland Nichols tells of his teaching days at Evergreen School. "The teacher was everything, doctor, nurse, janitor, advisor, playground supervisor, consultant, etc. Among students attending were the Bennets, Burtons, Clovers, Shogren, and Showalters (five boys). I recall taking one or two students at a time and crawling on our bellies for 100 yards or so through jack pines, scrub oaks and sand burrs, 'till every student in the school had seen first-hand a real live ruffed grouse cock drumming on a log nearby. I remember as well, amusing students after school, by tossing up small rocks and sticks, and hitting them unerringly with my little .22 automatic I always carried in my '29 Model A Ford."

"There was Elsie Chell, a County Supervisor of Normal School graduates; she had one nagging habit of sliding into the school yard unannounced in the hopes, I always thought, of catching me without a necktie. I hated the things, but, kept one in my desk, just in case. Elsie's '37 V-8 Ford was exceptionally quiet, and often my first awareness of her presence was when I saw her glowering at me from the schoolroom door--much to the amusement of the students, as I stood

there barefooted and necktieless with my heart in my throat."

"Evergreen may have been the first school in the State to shorten Christmas vacation and lengthen Thanksgiving vacation so that the older children could take part in the annual deer hunt. Although used "safety" as an argument, I knew that many students would be absent anyway, so important were "jump steaks" as they referred to venison, to fill the family larder."

Nichols was one of the last teachers at Evergreen; graduating from Polk County Normal's first two-year program in June 1939, started teaching in September, 1939, at age 19, at Evergreen, there he taught for 2 years.



Evergreen teachers include:

Mary McKenzie	Marcia Anderson
Alice Ellefson	Blanche Perry
Anna Holmbeck	Viola Lindberg
Florence Legnid	Loretta Legnid
Laura Ovitt	Ruby Ovitt
Ruth Sybrant	Helen Milio
Ruth Ovitt	Raymond Thompson
Max Seed	Vivian Frances



Evergreen school students, possibly in the 1930's, stand in front of their school.



A more up to date school was built in 1914.

Leora Van Sickle Roland Nichols
Ruth Wallingford

Evergreen students were transported to Wolf Creek.



After the school closed in 1940, it was used as a private residence.



River Road Ramblings by Russ Hanson

Please think about joining us at our regular 3rd Thursday of the month 7 pm meetings at the Cushing Community Center (second floor level, around the back of the old Cushing School). We have a good time visiting, some show and tell, and of course the business of planning the next events.

At our last meeting, we voted to donate \$500 to the Community Center for the repair or replacement of the flat tar and gravel roof which has been leaking quite a bit more over the last two years and not only discoloring the ceiling tiles, but damaged some of our exhibits. We are hopeful that will stimulate others to contribute to the cause. The Community Center is really too valuable a resource to let deteriorate!

We helped with the 75th Sterling Settler's Picnic at the end of June. It was well attended, excellent food with the potluck offerings, and a fun time to visit with old friends. SELHS offered a photo book for sale—a history of the picnic. We have two versions: Full color for \$20 and black and white for \$10. Still have some on hand, so you can request one by mail to SELHS Box 731, Cushing WI 54006 and include \$3 for postage (or pick one up at US Bank in Cushing).

The upcoming events are the Polk County Fair July 25-28 where SELHS is hosting the old Red School House on the fair grounds this year; Doc Squirt Day Motorcycle Rally (Aug 10?), Cushing Fun Days Aug 24, and the River Road Ramble on September 28th.

We are nudging the Cushing Rural Fire Department to join us in a celebration of their 50th anniversary this year! They started in 1963, and have been a wonderful success and asset to our small community. If you see a volunteer, congratulate them and thank them. My dad, Vivian (VR) Hanson was on the Sterling Town Board in 1963 along with Ernest Swanson, Stanley Larson, Walter Gullickson and Vivian Swenson (I think I have the list right). Rodney Swanson and I have visited a few times, remembering the huge effort made by the whole community and by our fathers in bringing the fire department into existence. I think Maurice Christenson was one of the original trainees for the department. This is still in the planning, as the fire department volunteers are modest about blowing their own sirens, so the rest of us need to do it for them!!!!

By the way, the very first fire was the old North Bar in Cushing, January of 1964. The old wood building was a loss, but the fire department managed to slow things down so the building could be emptied. The joke then—we weren't able to save the building, but did save all the beer! George Laier, reminisced that before the new fire department, there was a pumping unit and hose and that water that filled the basement from the refrigeration and locker plant units in the Co-op store (the big concrete block building between the bars) was a reservoir for the pump. The huge water tank in the Creamery also could be tapped.

Dad told the story of the discussion of the water pump size for the very first fire truck, a home built one made by Bill Skow of rural Luck. One hundred fifty gallons per minute versus 300 gallons per minute? Stanley Larson solved it by commenting "Our pumper holds 300 gallons. Do we want to get to the fire and empty the tank in one minute or two minutes. Seems to me a one minute fire department would not seem as impressive as a two minute one!" So the less expensive 150 gallon pump was voted by the board!

On a personal note, Margo has completed all of a year of breast cancer treatments, and other than some extreme sunburn from radiation, an arm needing continued stretching from surgery, she is feeling great and is up to Cushing for the rest of the summer. Thank you all for your thoughts, prayers, cards and calls.

My own myasthenia gravis is in drug free remission right now, so I am feeling about as good as I have in several years. Hope it lasts for both of us.

We lost a great supporter and member in LeRoy Hedberg earlier this year. We will miss him and his wonderful stories of the old days. Our deepest sympathy to Marlys and the family.

Mark Johnson is recovering from successful heart bypass surgery and soon should be back in action. Dottie Adams is back home after a stay in the hospital and much improved. Modern medicine can do a lot to keep us old timers out there and kicking. My neighbor, Jennie Nelson, 96, drove to the Sterling Picnic and got the award for the oldest person there. Mom, at 91, is slowing down a little, but still can pick her own peas!

**Elected Officers and Board Members
Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical
Society November 2012**

Chair - Russ Hanson

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

Vice-chair - Mark Johnson

2601 240th Ave
St Croix Falls WI 54024

Secretary/Treasurer - Donna Blair

2677 240th Av
St Croix Falls WI 54024

Emeritus Chair – Marcie Marquardt

quietmeadows@lakeland.ws

Executive Board Members –NEEDED!

George Laier, Russ and Dottie Adams,
Marlys Hedberg, Joan Swanson,
Justin Swanson, Marcie Marquardt. Volunteer to
join us!

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

Wanted! You as a volunteer for the
Sterling Eureka and Laketown Historical
Society! A little time and a lot of fun!

The Polk County Genealogical society is at
the Luck Museum Monday 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/

*Do you have an email address? If so, send it
to 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!*

75 Years of
the Sterling
Old Settlers
Picnic



*Latest book from
SELHS a picture
book of the 75
years of Sterling
Picnics.
Full Color \$23
Black/White \$13
Postage included
in price
Check to SELHS
Box 731
Cushing WI
54006
Wonderful
Collection!*

*Memberships are due each June. Come to Sterling
Picnic on June 30th at the Cushing Community Center and
renew for another year and see if we have a membership
premium this year! We depend on your membership and
contributions and book sales for our operating funds, so be
generous!*

*Make a check to SELHS and send it to
SELHS*

Box 731 Cushing, WI 54006

*Then join us at a 3rd Thursday 7 pm meeting at Cushing
and help us with the Overhaul and Refurbishing of the
Memory Rooms. We need ideas, good minds, good backs,
people who can paint ceiling tiles and people who like to
sort through old photos and items and organize them*

*We have been thinking about having a few history
programs, like we did a few years ago, so if you have ideas,
or have a collection, or have something you would like to
tell about or learn about let us know!*

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.



Who is this mystery person? Hint— She is a 7th grader at the Evergreen School pictured here in 1934. She now lives on the east end of Evergreen Avenue on the farm where she has lived for 71 years!

See page 3 for answer.

Cushing, WI 54006
Box 731
SELHS