

## S.S. No. 13

**Lot 33 (west half), Concession 15,  
East Zorra Township  
between Perth-Oxford Road 24  
and the Maplewood Sideroad**



*It would be well nigh impossible to write up any story of S.S. 13 without mention of the day we made the headlines in the Toronto paper — “40 Escape Death As School Roof Falls”. This was on May 17, 1932 and while this situation probably was not quite as grave as the headline made out, it was, nevertheless, just a bit too exciting. A windstorm dislodged the back of the school, covering the floor at the back of the room with bricks and debris and it really was only because this happened after the afternoon recess that no one was injured. The younger children had gone home and the older ones were at the front of the room for instruction. The lesson on the blackboard was on “Fresh Air and Ventilation” and we got it that day.*

*\*\* an excerpt from the History of S.S. No. 13  
written by Ruth Schmidt, a former pupil*

It would be equally impossible to write the story of S.S. No. 13 without mention of the fire in 1961. The only item not destroyed in the inferno in the interior of the building was the floor furnace. The students enjoyed an enforced holiday until repairs were made.

Bad things often come in threes. The third instance in this story dates back to 1890. George Damm was the school teacher at the time and was boarding with the Solomon Bender family. One November evening, while sitting on a bench near the window getting ready to play a game of checkers, Damm was hit by a bullet in the head. Dr. Steele from Tavistock was summoned, removed the slug and applied a dressing. The doctor later stated that the force of the slug was diminished by the window pane and that was the only reason Damm survived. Three days later John Shannon, from the next concession, was arrested and charged with attempted murder. There is no record of his motive or his fate.

All that excitement notwithstanding, S.S. No. 13 was a typical one-room school. Records show that in 1856 there was a meeting at John Sommer's to elect three trustees for the purpose of establishing a school. The three chosen were Henry Mogk, John Steinman and John Battram. One month later, at a meeting held by the residents of School Section 13 it was resolved that “a log school house be built on the west half of Lot 33 in the 15th concession. The school was to be 22 feet wide and 30 feet long”. Work started immediately. The school

was built at a cost of 73 pounds, 5s, 6d (just under \$400) which included lumber, nails, chinking and plastering ... and 10 shillings worth of whisky. By January children were enrolled and the first teacher, Charles Riley, was hired. Mr. Riley's salary was \$25 a month, paid quarterly.

In 1872 it was determined that a new school was needed. The minutes of that meeting, written in German, indicate some words were exchanged about exactly where the new school should be built ... existing site or new site. The new site just south of the old school building won out. The new red brick building cost \$1130 which seems considerable. J. Bender was paid \$50 for the school site and the old school was sold to P. Sommer for \$20.

Over the years money for the school was obtained in various ways ... government grants and locally collected taxes being the two main sources. The teacher was occasionally the tax collector. At times funds were short and ratepayers loaned money to cover costs. A new stove in 1891 cost \$9.50. At about the same time the school was insured with the first premium costing \$5.50 against a valuation of \$800.

The year 1907 saw something new and exciting at S.S. No. 13. There was a singing school established. Lessons were 13 for 25 cents. The next year was a busy one. New desks for the students and for the teacher, a new clock, a new shed and a bell were all purchased.

Hydro was installed in 1937 and indoor plumbing came shortly thereafter.

As was typical at the time, teachers came and went, often changing on a yearly basis. Not so with Mr. E.C. (Ernest) Seltzer. A favourite with parents, students and school board alike, Mr. Seltzer taught at S.S. No. 13 for 24 years from 1920 to 1944. Some years he walked to and from his home in Tavistock every day.

Time brought changes. The last meeting of the ratepayers of this area was held at the school house on December 16, 1946. Joe Baechler was Chairman and Lorne Kaufman was the Secretary. Future business was carried out by the Township Area School Board.

In 1959 Grades 7 and 8 went to the Hickson Public School. In September of 1965 all the schoolchildren north of the Maplewood Sideroad were relocated to Tavistock Public School and those to the south went to Hickson Public School.

As with the many other one-room schools, it was the end of an era. The school building has seen extensive changes over the years and is now a private home.

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*The Tavistock & District Historical Society has a collection of material from all the schools in the area.*

*Specific to S.S. No. 13, we have articles, stories and photos as detailed in the list following. Some of the material was collected by our Historical Society and some was donated by former students. We've included a few photos here. If you would like to see any or all of the material please call one of the telephone numbers in Contacts in this website to make an appointment to visit the museum / archives. The Historical Society would be very appreciative of any material you may wish to donate related to our local schools and any information you can offer to help date or name records that are incomplete..*

## Photos

- students and teacher Christina Wilker - year uncertain - 1887 -1893 or 1897
- students and teacher William O. Kaufmann - circa 1909
- students and teacher Minnie Sippel - 1915
- students (all girls) - 1919
- students and teacher Ernest (Fance) Seltzer - no date (Mr. Seltzer taught from 1920 - 1944)
- students and teacher Ernest (Fance) Seltzer - circa 1942
- students and teacher Ernest (Fance) Seltzer - no date (Mr. Seltzer taught from 1920 - 1944)
- S.S. No. 13 banner with Harold Bender, Miss Bragg and Mayne Ramseyer - 1951
- students and teacher Jean Ross - 1955 or 1956
- students and teacher Bodgen Weiss - 1958-9
- students 1964-5

## Articles

- listing of school teachers and some salaries 1857 - 1956
- listing of school Trustees. Chairman and Secretary 1856 - 1944 (some years missing)
- names in school minute book - 1866-1878
- story of Teacher George Damm being shot - 1890
- notations in the Tavistock Gazette 1913 - 1932
- Gazette story of the 1913 school picnic
- handwritten listing of students and teacher Lillian Grey - 1914
- Gazette listing of students 1928, 1930 and 1937
- Gazette story of the 1966 school reunion
- land deed ... Amos Baechler and wife to Trustees S.S. No. 13 East Zorra - Roland Heinbuch, Nick Zehr and George W. Kaufman - 1932
- school history written by Ruth Schmidt - 1966
- short history written in 1975

\*\*\*\*\* See next 6 pages for school photos. \*\*\*\*\*



S.S. No 13 - year uncertain ... possibly between 1887 and 1893 or 1897

Teacher - Christina Wilker

Back Row - left to right

Lovina Weitzel, Laura Facey, Susie Ruby, Minnie Weicker, Louisa Wettlaufer, Sophia Wilker, Lydia Facey, Amanda Jutzi, Barbara Schwartzentruber, John Facey, Amos Baechler, Tommy Daniels, William Facey

Middle Row - left to right

Lydia Jutzi, Lizzie Jutzi, Katie Bender, Ella Murray, Katie Erb, Barbara Sommers, Katie Weitzel, Sidonia Wettlaufer, Nancy Bender, Christian Lebold, Freddie Sharp, Christian Lichty, Joel Schwartzentruber, Milton Weicker, Wesley Heinbuch

Front Row - left to right

Milton Weitzel, Willie Sharp, Herbert Weicker, Roland Heinbuch, Willie Wilker, Nancy Jutzi, Annie Lebold, Fannie Erb, Mary Lichti, Madeline Lichti, Maggie Wettlaufer, Catherine Baechler, Mary Jutzi



S.S. No. 13 - possibly 1909

Teacher - W.O. Kaufmann

There are no student names with this photo. Can you help?



The Girls of S.S. No. 13 - 1919

Back Row - left to right

Katie Albrecht, Annie Mae Baechler, Lydian Roth, Christina Sommers, Lucinda Lebold, Molna Kaufman, Annie Ruby, Emma Leis, Fannie Mae Baechler

Front Row - left to right

Aleda Leis, Marion Roth, Selena Ruby, Ruby Iutzi, Marion Bender, Katie Ruby, Viola Sommers, Fannie Bender



S.S. No. 13 - year not known

Teacher - Ernest (Fance) Seltzer

Front Row - left to right

Bertha Ruby, Edith Ramseyer, Anna Bender, Kenneth Kaufman, Harry Mogk

Second Row - left to right

Emerson Ropp, Audrey Bender, Shirley Stere, Mary Roth, Rufus Baechler, Kenneth Mogk,  
Kenneth Lichti, Mervin Lichti

Third Row - left to right

Lorne Zehr, Raymond Ruby, Donald Ramseyer, Arthur Yantzi, Kenneth Ruby, Mary Ropp,  
Melvin Ramseyer

Fourth Row - left to right

Teacher Mr. Seltzer, Jean Ruby, Joyce Ruby, Violet Mogk, Jean Iutzi, Betty Schwartzentruber,  
Kenneth Yantzi

Back Row - left to right

Doris Baechler, Velma Yantzi, Ralph Wettlaufer ?, Marjorie Ruby



S.S. No. 13 - 1955 or 1956

Teacher - Jean Ross

Front Row - left to right

Linda Mogk, Sherman Roth, Ruth Yantzi, Karen Erb, Bruce Ruby, Elaine Ruby, Ben Geltink

Second Row - left to right

Richard Baechler, Irene Roth, Roger Bender, Anna Ramseyer, Carol Ruby, Daphne Bender, Earl Yantzi, David Sommers

Third Row - left to right

Carol Ramseyer, Verna Ramseyer, Martha Baechler, Catherine Ramseyer, Carol Zehr, Sharon Ruby, Carl Ruby, John Geltink, Elaine Ramseyer, Mark Erb

Fourth Row - left to right

Gary Sommers, Paul Ramseyer, Laura Baechler, Carol Kaufman, Katie Ann Yantzi, Richard Sommers, Earl Ramseyer, Mary Ruby, Keith Erb





S.S. No. 13 - 1964 - Grades 1 - 6

Names not available. Can you help?