

STATE OF INDIANA

# Department of Public Instruction



*Indiana Supt. of Public Instruction*

TWENTY-EIGHTH BIENNIAL REPORT OF  
THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT  
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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OF PORTER COUNTY.

EARLY SCHOOLS IN THE VARIOUS TOWNSHIPS—FIRST TEACHERS—DESCRIPTION OF THE EARLY SCHOOL HOUSE—CURRENT FACTS.

By FRED H. COLE, County Superintendent.

Joseph Bailly, the first white settler in Porter County, located upon the Calumet river in 1822. At that time no schools had been established within convenient reach of his cabin in the wilderness, and as soon as his daughters were old enough to attend school they were taken to a Catholic institution in the East, where they received an education far superior to that of most girls born as they were upon the frontier of civilization. Probably the first school in Porter County was taught at the dwelling of Jesse Morgan in the winter of 1833-34, but the name of the teacher cannot be ascertained. About that time there were a number of adventurers wandering through the frontier region, and as some of these men possessed a fair education they were in the habit of stopping at some place upon the approach of winter and organizing a school. When spring came they would continue their journey, and in time their names would be forgotten. More than likely it was one of these migratory pedagogues who taught the school at Mr. Morgan's.

In 1834, a subscription school was taught in what is now Morgan Township, by Miss Orilla Stoddard, but the exact location of the school house—a log structure 12 by 14 feet—is a matter of some dispute. It was located on the Morgan prairie, convenient to the homes of Morris Witham, Henry Adams, William Billings, and John Keller, who were patrons of the school.

The first school in Center Township was taught in the summer of 1835, by Miss Mary Hammond. The school house was located in section 7, not far from the road now leading to Flint Lake and Chesterton, and about a mile north of the fair grounds. The following winter a school was taught by the same teacher in Washington Township, in a log house erected for the purpose by A. V. Bartholomew. Four families only were represented and the term lasted for three months.

In 1836, shortly after the organization of the county was completed, the first school in Liberty Township was opened in a little log house in the Zane settlement, Mrs. Sophia Dye being the teacher. She had about fifteen pupils enrolled and received a salary of two dollars a week, raised by subscription. There is a tradition that a school was taught in Union Township in 1836,

in a log cabin near the place known as the "Hoosier Nest." but some say the school was not taught there until the following year.

In Boone Township, the few settlers who brought their families with them felt the need of educational advantages for their children, and in 1837 they erected a log school house of the most primitive pattern in which a school was taught in the fall of that year, but the name of the teacher seems to have been forgotten. About the same time the first school was taught in Valparaiso by a man named Masters. It was in a small building which Dr. Seneca Ball had erected in the rear of his residence, and which was subsequently used by him for a wood house.

The year 1838 was one of considerable activity in the educational affairs in Porter County. Schools were maintained in all the neighborhoods where they had been established previously.



Primitive Log Cabin School, Porter County.

A log school house, about 16 by 18 feet, with "Yankee fireplace" and greased paper for windows, was built in Jackson township, near Jackson Center, and Jane Jones taught the first term there, receiving a salary of one dollar a week. Prior to this, however, a subscription school had been taught in this township in a private dwelling on section 26, about a mile and a half southeast of Clear Lake. In Pleasant Township, a log school house was erected on section 13, not far from the site of the present town of Kouts. The house was built by the cooperative labor of the citizens and at the first term in the fall of that year eleven scholars were enrolled.

Two school houses were built in Portage Township in 1840; one on section 20, township 36, range 6, and the other in the southwestern part of the township. During the decade from 1840 to 1850 a number of new schools were established in various parts of the county, the public school fund became available,

and the beginning of a public school system was inaugurated. Mary Osborn-Cole, mother of the present county superintendent, was the first teacher to "draw public money" as a teacher in Liberty Township.

In 1854, Roman Henry received \$160 for building the second school house in Pine Township—a structure 14 by 20 feet. (How different from the modern two-room building now under construction in Porter Township at an initial cost of more than \$8,000).

The first school houses were nearly all log buildings along the sides of which one log was left out and the openings thus formed were covered with oiled paper in lieu of window glass to admit the light. Window glass in those days was a luxury too great to be considered in the construction of the district school houses. A huge fireplace at one end furnished heat to the school



One-room Frame Building, Porter County. Erected about 1862.

room, the seats were usually formed of split saplings in which holes were bored with a large augur and pins inserted to form the legs, the desks were wide boards supported on pins driven into the logs and ran along the sides of the room. Here pupils went at "writing time" to follow the copy written by the teacher at the head of a sheet of foolscap paper, and goose quill pens were frequently used. The three R's—"Readin', Ritin', and Rith-metic"—constituted the usual course of study, and the pupil who reached the "Rule of Three" in the last named branch was considered a fine mathematician. Yet it is quite probable that these early educational facilities were more appreciated and better utilized by the boys and girls than are the splendid opportunities by the graded school system of the present day.

Seven distinctive types of schoolhouse architecture have prevailed at different periods in Porter County, although probably no one community has witnessed the existence of more than

four examples.—The primitive log cabin, rudely fashioned (1835-1840); the one-room frame building, with a door in one end and windows along the sides (1840-1860); the small brick structure, conspicuous for its simplicity, with a door at one end and three windows in each side (1880); the brick building with some show of variation, such as entry and belfry (1890); the frame building with ornamental gables, and class-room indirect from entry (1900); the building with more than one class room (1912); and



Modern Township Consolidated School, Porter County.

last the building designed to serve not only as a school house but as a community center convenience as well.

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Some one has kindly said that the schools of Porter County have kept pace with the educational progress of the State. The boy or girl who is a part of the graded school system of today—who rides daily to school in a comfortable conveyance, is housed in a well-lighted, furnace-heated school building which affords opportunities for organized play and community center projects, where competent teachers with special training supervise study and encourage the abundant life; or the boy or girl who can have the privileges of a good township high school within easy reach of home cannot understand the great change that has come with years. Outside the city of Valparaiso, which has excellent

schools, commissioned high schools are maintained at Chesterton, Hebron, Kouts, Wheeler, and Boone Grove; a certified high school at Crisman; and three-year high schools in Jackson, Liberty, and Washington Townships. The coming year will see the establishment of four-year high schools in Liberty and Washington Townships and a junior high school in Union Township.

Space will not permit a proper discussion of the parochial schools nor of the worthy institution known as Valparaiso University which has grown through many vicissitudes to a vast educational medium which helps to raise the standard of citizenship and extend the area of prosperity, happiness and well-being.