MANITOWOC RAPIDS

All of the original Manitowoc county as set up in 1848, with the exception of the townships of Manitowoc and Two Rivers, was at first a part of Manitowoc Rapids. While this large area was a part of this township, school districts were organized in various communities throughout the original Manitowoc Rapids area. When the present Manitowoc Rapids was organized, some of the districts in the township had been given district numbers as high as number 10 and 11. That accounts for the present missing school district numbers of 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The first school district in Manitowoc Rapids was district number 3.

MANITOWOC RAPIDS 1 — SHADYSIDE

Florence T. Pleuss

Shadyside school was the name chosen for the school in Manitowoc Rapids No. 1. That was an appropriate name for the many box elders on the schoolground make a shady place on the land sloping to the west. These trees were planted many years ago by Louis Mathison. Most residents of the township still refer to this school as the Trainor school because the site adjoined the old Trainor farm to the east. Some old timers called it the Irish school because of the many Irish pupils who once attended it. The building is located on highway 151 about five miles from Manitowoc, the approximate location being near the N.W. corner of section 32, Manitowoc Rapids.

The land on which the school is located was purchased from the government on August 15, 1859 by Ole Christianson. There is evidently no record of how, from whom, and for how much the original school site was obtained. On June 28, 1909, an additional quarter acre was purchased from Wm. Fischer for $90. This added land to the west of the old schoolyard. The wish was to purchase additional space to the east instead of to the west, but since the Trainors had begun a small nursery on that piece of land, it was impossible to make a satisfactory deal.

The district was set up for school purposes about 1850, although there is no written record to prove this. Most of the other schools in this area were started about 1850, and so one must assume that district number 1 would have been organized about that time. Records do show that when Hakan Nordi bought his farm from Oswald Torrison in 1858 a schoolhouse was on it, and it was agreed to have it remain there as long as the district wanted it to remain.

The first one-room log school was erected about 1850. It is believed to have been located on the present site, but Hakan Nordi’s deed did not give the exact location of the school. The building was built by the early settlers with such materials as they had on hand. The farmers cut the logs, put up the school, and added homemade equipment for teaching and learning.

The benches seated eight pupils each with long boards used for desks. One “black” board was used, and each pupil was expected to furnish his own slate. A long box stove stood in the front of the room with smoke pipes leading to the chimney in the rear of the room. Water was brought from the Trainor farm in a pail from which the pupils got their drinking water by means of the inevitable dipper. Handwashing was not practiced with the precious water supply. The old log school burned down in 1871 from an overheated stove. The loss, in addition to the building, included a large new dictionary which had just been purchased. The remainder of the school term 1871-2 was held in a farm home across from the Trainor home.

In 1872 the present frame school was built for $500. It was not as well equipped as it is today. The building is about 26 x 32 with an entry, two cloakrooms, and a good-sized classroom. Three windows on each of the long sides and two in the front care for the lighting. There is no basement, so the heating and ventilation system
is placed in the schoolroom. At first an old box stove was used, but this was later replaced with a coal stove and more recently with a floor furnace. The old fashioned woodbox was built into the partition between the entry and classroom so that the firewood could be thrown into it without going into the classroom. At first the woodshed was located in front of the schoolhouse, but in 1907 it was moved and attached to the rear of the school. A door was cut into the rear schoolroom wall so that the fuel could then be easily gotten. The district erected a one-car garage after the teachers began driving to the school with their own automobiles. Neat, well-kept outdoor toilets are placed at the rear of the schoolyard.

To care for the large number of library and text books which were being added yearly, the district in the 1930's built a large library cupboard with plenty of shelves and storage space. It was placed against the wall between the entry and the classroom. Electric lights were installed in 1939. The present school equipment and care of the buildings reflect the progressiveness of the district and its able board members.

During the last few years of the old log school the enrollment was between 50 and 60 pupils. The size of the families then is shown by the fact that school records list the names of 11 children from the Mathison family, 16 from the Donovan family, and 7 from the Trainor family. Because two terms yearly were held up to about 1876, the town clerk's report to the superintendent in 1875 listed 81 pupils enrolled. After single terms were held, the enrollment figures dropped to between 30 and 50. In 1890, only 27 pupils were listed as attending, although there were 140 children of school age in the district. The 1945-46 attendance was 24, but that number was larger than for the past ten years. The establishment of the parochial school at Silver Lake, smaller families, older district residents, high school attendance, and other factors have caused this decline in enrollment.


The early school officers received little or no yearly salary. Their duties were to keep the school in repair, purchase necessary equipment, and hire the teacher after the voters decided whether to hire a male or female teacher. The teacher's contract was usually written in the clerk's record book. Th earliest known clerk was Lars Mathison who served for more than ten years in the 1870's. Others serving were Thos. Savage as clerk from 1880 to 1898 and Al. Gauger, Steve Savage, Henry Baruth, Peter Mason, Frank Pleuss, and Louis Mathison as other board members before 1906.

Three month summer and five month winter terms were common in the early days of this school. The superintendents' records show that five month terms were held after 1875, but evidently a spring session must also have been held because other schools in the township had 8 and 10 month school terms. The salary paid teachers was usually lower than for other township teachers. Names of teachers before 1872 are unknown. Some of those after that date to 1906 were: Louise Cox 1872 S, Mary Sexton 1872-3 W. and S., Josie Murphy 1873 W, Bedelia Comer 1874-5 S and W, Wm. Mulholland 1876, John Barnes 1877, Mary Gilbert 1878, Maggie Kelley 1879-80, Fred Hammond 1894, F. Vetting 1895-97, Henry C. Ewald 1898, and Laura Madsen 1904-5. Other teachers before 1906 but the exact year unknown were Maggie Barry, Katie Egan, Minnie Torrison, Bridget Morris, James Crowe, and a Mr. Kelley. Many of these teachers boarded at the Lars Mathison home. Fred Hammond became Dr. F. Hammond, and James Crowe became a rural mailman.

The subjects taught in this school at first were limited to reading, spelling, arithmetic, and history. Texts common to the county were used, except that in this school Goodrich's history was used. There were no grades as we find them today. The divisions consisted of A, B, C, D, and fourth reader classes. Most pupils failed to get as far as the fourth reader, but if they completed that they were considered brilliant and fit to go out to teach.

School fairs were popular about the 1920's. The pupils cared for gardens, did canning and sewing during the summer to exhibit their products at the fall school fair. The articles, arranged on shelving, would be judged for prizes by a fair committee. In the evening the district residents came to see the exhibit and the prize winning products. Debates and the annual school picnic were other community affairs enjoyed by the residents.
Manitowoc Rapids district number 2 was officially designated the Silver Lake school in 1918, although it was always known by that name. The school site is located on highway 151, about one-fourth mile east of Silver Lake. The site is on the N.E. corner of the W½ of the SE¹/₄ of section 34. It extends west one chain (66 feet), then south 2½ chains, then east one chain, and then north to the starting point. The grounds contain about ¼ of an acre. The tract of land on which the school is built was sold to Oliver Clausen by the government in 1837. He in turn sold it to August Wahle, from whom District No. 2 bought the school site in 1860. Evidently the site was leased for school purposes from 1849 to 1860.

In 1849, R. B. Mupon, town superintendent of schools of Manitowoc Rapids, called a meeting of the qualified electors of this area for the purpose of organizing a school district. The first school meeting was held June 25, 1849, at 5 P. M. at the home of Albert Wheeler. At this meeting, the voters decided in favor of a new district and elected the schoolboard composed of a clerk, treasurer, and director. In 1850, the sum of $120 was raised to pay for the building of a school and for maintaining school for a 2½ month term. Records show that the little schoolhouse, built of logs, no doubt, cost the sum of $83. The schoolhouse, seemingly, was not built on the present site, for in 1852 the little school was moved, but from where to where is not stated. The school consisted of a dingy little room which was heated by a wobbly old box stove which toppled over at convenient times, strewing stove pipes about the room. Each family having children attending school, had to contribute one-half cord of firewood, split for use. The dingy walls were bare of pictures and decorations. The smoked up interior was annually whitewashed. The first school was abandoned and sold for $4.50 in 1860.

The second school, a frame building about 18 x 24 feet, was built in 1860. It had windows on three sides according to the custom of the times. Each window was provided with shutters which could be opened and closed. The furniture consisted of crude, home-made benches on which the pupils left their initials for later students to gouge and deepen, for the jack-knife was the prized possession of every boy. After this building was abandoned as a school, it served as the school's woodshed until 1934 when a new combination fuel shed and garage was erected from remnants of the old schoolhouse.

In 1884 or 1885 the sum of $736 was raised by the district to build a brick schoolhouse, the one in use today. The building is about 24 x 32 feet and houses a good-sized classroom, two cloakrooms, and a hall-entry. The front of the room had the floor raised to make a teacher's platform. The school has windows on the two long sides and on the entrance side. The school has been heated by various types of stoves and floor furnaces. In 1947 a Smith oil heater system was installed. At first the furniture consisted of patented double desks and seats, several of which are still in use as recitation benches. In 1936, the district purchased single chair-type desks with the book storage drawer under the seat. Slate blackboards replaced the painted boards in 1927. This school was one of the first in the county to install electric lights. Running water is piped to the school from the Wm. Fessler home west of the school.

The school was almost destroyed by fire just before Christmas in 1941. All preparations were complete for the presentation of the Christmas program, when a short circuit of an extension cord caused a fire which damaged the interior of the schoolhouse. Following the fire the walls and ceiling were covered with Nuwood, the teacher's platform removed, a part of the floor relaid, and open library shelving added along the west wall. There was some sentiment to modernize the school through approved window lighting, but that plan failed to materialize.
The Silver Lake public school has never had a large enrollment, nor has the district had a very large school census. The greatest number of children of school age (4-20) occurred in 1895 when there were about 125. For 1946, there were 182 children of school age residing in the district. The highest enrollment for this school was 69 in 1870 when the attendance for the two separate terms was totaled. The average attendance from 1870 to 1920 was from 30 to 45 yearly. Only 8 pupils were enrolled in the winter of 1927. About a decade ago "Kadow's Addition" west of Manitowoc, which is partly in this school district, began developing with the result that the enrollment of this school has again gone up to about 30 pupils yearly. Parochial school attendance at Silver Lake and at Manitowoc has affected the size of this school. In December of 1947, the Kadow Addition was annexed to the city of Manitowoc cutting the enrollment from about 30 to 15 pupils.

The Silver Lake area was one of the earliest to develop and become settled because of its nearness to Manitowoc. A very early settler of this district was Capt. A. G. Fulton. He is said to have captained the first lake schooner out of Manitowoc port. Other early settlers of this community were Henry Backhaus, Henry Wills, George and Fred Drumm, Isaac Ellner, Henry Achenbach, Dan Tills, Geo. Hammel, Martin Schmidt, Philip Poh, C. H. Vogelsang, Wm. Wicke, Mark Williams, Aug. Wahl, Geo. Bartels, E. A. Bennett, S. A. Wood, and Jos. Le Compt. Thousands of former pupils have gone forth from the district school to become prominent in their chosen communities.

The school district has always elected outstanding community citizens on the schoolboard. Among the first officers, back in the 1850's, were Paul Champton, clerk; Albert Wheeler, director; and Mark Williams, treasurer. A later family prominently connected with the school was the Hackmanns. Emil Hackmann served as treasurer for 24 years, while his father served on the board before him for 30 years. Some other residents serving up to 1906 were Christ Vogt, Henry Wills, H. Backhaus, Herman Roeke, and Ernest Pleuss.

During the first years of the school, the district raised from $1 to 50 dollars yearly for the teachers' wages. The length of the term depended upon the wages which the teacher demanded. When the sum raised was used up, the term was over. In the 1860's and 1870's two terms of school yearly were common. Usually a female teacher was employed in the summer when the older pupils were kept at home for farm work. Records reveal that Sunday school was taught in the building in the summer of 1861. The list of teachers as reported to the superintendent was incomplete. Those on record were C. J. Shove 1872; Josie Murphy 1872 S.; John Lyon 1873; J. W. Flagg 1874; M. Sullivan 1876-7; C. C. Barnes 1878-9; Henry Wernecke 1880; Fred Vetting 1894; John F. Walter 1895-98; E. C. Brick 1904; and Harriet Wernecke 1905. Two other prominent educators before 1906 were Fred Christiansen and a Miss Richter.

The Silver Lake area has many interesting and historical places. The first cheese factory in this district was located at Silver Lake and was owned by Fred Slintz. Brown's Corners at the junction of highways 151 and 42 was named after a Mr. Brown who owned much of the land at that location. It one time boasted of several taverns and a bowling alley. A mile south of Brown's Corner on highway 42, the ruins of Kuene's Mill are to be found. Across the road from these ruins are areas of rich gravel deposits. The first Alverno post office was located at Silver Lake in a store owned by Anton Fessler. Alverno once was a station for the Soo Line Railway. A mile west of this crossroad hamlet, the Holy Family Convent is located. This religious institution was begun in 1870, partly destroyed by fire in 1881, and since that time rebuilt and enlarged as the years have passed. Beautiful Silver Lake is a recreational spot for Manitowoc residents.

Today Manitowoc Rapids district No. 2 is an area one section wide and four sections long with prosperous farms and potential suburban areas beginning here and there. A large part of sections 35 and 36 is being developed as county asylum property and as a part of the Kadow Addition.
With the coming of settlers into Manitowoc county, the county school commissioners began planning for the educational system of the county. Accordingly on September 28, 1844, three school districts were formed, the boundaries being the same as the assessor districts. School district No. 1 was to be known as the Two Rivers school district; school district No. 2 was to be known as the Mill school district; and school district No. 3 was to be known as the Union school district. The last named district was the beginning of the present Manitowoc Rapids school district No. 3. Notice was given by the school commissioners to the three districts on October 5, 1844 to elect school officers. Thus it can be seen that the original Rapids No. 3 included all of the present towns of Maple Grove, Franklin, Kossuth, Rockland, Cato, Manitowoc Rapids, and the northern two thirds of the towns of Eaton, Liberty, and Newton.

Before the organization of these public school districts, private schools were established. The second private school in Manitowoc county was established at Rapids in 1839 by Mrs. L. M. Potter who had been teaching for some years before this in the government school at Green Bay. This private school was located near the second bridge according to Falgès’s “History of Manitowoc County.”

On January 3, 1842, a petition signed by several inhabitants of Manitowoc Rapids was presented “praying that the county commissioners allow the use of the Town House (County House) for a schoolhouse when it is not needed for county business.” The petition was granted “provided no avoidable injury shall be done to said House.” The commissioners wanted to show no favoritism to the Rapids residents so they further stated that “by guaranteeing of said liberty (to Rapids), the inhabitants of Manitowoc and Two Rivers will be entitled the privilege of building schoolhouses in their respective districts, if wanted, before one is built at Manitowoc Rapids”.

The County House then was the first public school for the people of Rapids for on July 12, 1842, the county commissioners ordered the school committee be allowed to use the front room in the County House for school purposes for the sum of $1.50 per month. The first teacher was a Mr. Beardsley who had as some of his pupils P. P. Smith, D. Sackett, Giles and Ervin Hubbard, and Jos. LaCounte. On March 4, 1851, the sheriff was directed to collect arrearage of rent of the County House from school district No. 3 of Manitowoc Rapids, and to re-let the building whenever it was not rented. This County House, constructed in 1840 at a total cost of $650, was destroyed by fire April 30, 1852, and left the district without a school building.

There are no written school records of the district prior to 1897. Historical facts had to be obtained from older residents and from county records. It is said that after the destruction of the County House a frame school was erected on the present school-yard. It is said that the first part built was of frame construction about 24 x 30 feet. In 1888, an addition of about 14 feet was added to the north end and the whole building brick veneered at a cost of $565. The school was located about 50 feet west of the present structure. Before the yard was graveled, the foundation stones were still in evidence.

The entrance faced the south with a good-sized stone platform for a porch. Double doors opened into a small hallway with the boys' cloakroom at the southeast corner and the girls' room at the southwest corner. Later on just the girls' room was used for a cloakroom and the boys' room was used to store a week's supply of wood. Two doors— one from each cloakroom, opened into a large classroom with four or five windows on each side. The teacher's platform was located between the two entrance doors, so the pupils faced to the south as they sat in four rows of home-made desks and seats made of planks. Wooden blackboards were replaced by slate ones about 1890. The usual wood stove heated the schoolroom. The old schoolhouse was sold to
Walter Kugler for $113 and the woodshed to John Heinrichs for $26. What use they made of the building is not recorded.

A special meeting to consider the matter of a new school was called on February 23, 1906, upon petition. At that meeting and many subsequent special meetings, the voters authorized a 2-story brick building with a basement at a maximum cost of $3,700. The vote to build was 27 to 9. The money necessary was borrowed from Thos. Stehle at 4% for 6 years, with a specified amount to be repaid each year. C. H. Tegen was hired as the architect, a Mr. Bartke did the masonry, and Albert C. Tomcheck the carpenter work. J. F. Woerfel furnished the 65,000 bricks. The basement was dug by Ed. Brauneil, and the basement masonry laid by Holdorf and Gehrig of St. Nazianz for $485. The second story of the building remained unfinished until 1909 when a graded school was organized.

The basement was constructed of stone with the building being 38 x 40 feet. The two classrooms were each 27 x 36 feet, well-lighted by windows from the left and rear. Double entrance doors located at the southeast corner lead to halls and partitioned cloakrooms along the eastern part of the building on both floors. Stairs from the entrance also lead into a partitioned basement. The large basement room was used as a fuel, furnace, manual training, and playroom. The smaller part, directly below the upper cloakrooms and halls, was used as a storage and washroom. Water from an artesian well, high in iron content, bubbled into a wash basin the year around. The building was equipped with modern furniture and teaching and learning aids. A second-floor stairway leads to a spacious attic used for a storage space.

By 1944, the two room school became overcrowded with children of war workers at the shipyards. A special meeting was called to decide on an addition to the school. After a thorough discussion, the vote was in favor of building a two story addition on the east at a cost of $28,000 of which $14,000 was to be paid by the federal government. The addition was completed in 1945 with modern indoor lavatories, playroom, Uni-vent heating-ventilating system, stoker, hot water boiler, and modern construction throughout.

The enrollment in the Rapids public school at first was never high in proportion to the number of children of school age. Even in the later 1800's, when there were about 200 school children in the district, there were only between 50 and 100 pupils attending the public school. A Catholic parochial school, one block west of the district school, enrolled many of the Rapids children until it was discontinued about 1900. It was not until 1909, that the enrollment of over 70 pupils forced the district to provide a graded school with two teachers. In 1940, the enrollment had gone above 75 and the state required a third teacher. The third teacher held classes in the first floor cloakroom with the primary classroom used as the assembly room for all children in the first five grades. This arrangement prevailed until the new addition was built. Today the enrollment in the Rapids school averages above 125 pupils yearly and a fourth teacher is recommended. The fact that there are over 300 children of school age residing in the district indicates that the Manitowoc parochial schools are enrolling many of the Rapids grade children.

The following residents served as school clerks before 1906: Herman Brauneil 1872-5, Wm. Hein 1875-80, Edw. Schafland 1889-5, and Ed. Bedell 1896-1906. Others serving on the board before 1906 as listed in record books were Arthur Klingholz, John Heinrichs, Sr., Herman Kugler and C. Dobbert.

County records show that winter and summer sessions of school were held. The winter sessions were for five months and the summer for four months. Manitowoc Rapids No. 3 was one of the first to have a ten month term as early as 1879. The salary paid the teacher was usually the highest. Teachers' names on record prior to 1906 were Mary Hubbard 1872 S., Henry Gerpheid 1872 W., Wm. Ross 1873 S., J. W. Lizer 1874 W., Selma Klingholz 1875 and 1876 S, G. V. Nash 1875 W., T. W. Burke 1876, B. L. Oakley 1877, W. H. Andrews 1878-80, Simon Wehrwein 1894-5, Otto Drews 1896-1900, Dave Fitzgerald 1901-03, H. E. Mason 1904, and E. C. Brick 1905-1908. Others reported as E. C. Brick's teachers in the 1890's were P. Carrigan, Fred Meisnest, Jos. Papisiel, and Henry Groth. Several Rapids teachers became leaders in the educational field. Among them we find E. C. Brick, Co. Supt. of Schools, Grant County; Jos. Voboril and Jos. Rappel, Co. Supt. of Schools, Manitowoc County; and R. R. Guse, county supervising teacher.

Rapids district No. 3 is the historical spot of Manitowoc county. The first county seat is properly marked with a stone and flag pole on County Hill. Manitowoc county's first Catholic church was located a block northwest of the public school and was established in 1850 by Father Josef Brunner. A historical monument for Chief Mexico, a Chippewa Indian Chief who camped frequently at Rapids, is located in the vil-
lage. Hubbard’s mill was located below Bedell’s hill along the river on the present Wernecke farm. The remains of the dam for this mill remain. The land in this vicinity was owned by Hubbard and the area near the mill was laid out in lots. Before 1870, this area had several houses, many stables and barns, and a boarding house, now the Wernecke home. The other dams — The Klingholz dam located about at the former Wienke home, and a dam below the present Ourada Mill, were also power sites at one time but are now no longer in existence. Transportation to Manitowoc in the early times was by boat. At that time the river was much deeper than it is today. Potter’s field is located at the top of the hill near Horseshoe Bend.

Today, the village of Rapids and the public school are affected greatly by the growth of the city of Manitowoc towards the west as more and more of the old district No. 3 is being attached to the city. The time may come soon when the Rapids school will be incorporated into the Manitowoc city school system.

MANITOWOC RAPIDS 4 — MC ALLISTER

Elmer Kleman

Manitowoc Rapids District Number 4 is now called the McAllister School because of the many connections that the McAllisters had with the early history of the school. McAllister’s name is prominently connected with the early county board of supervisors. To past and present residents of the community and of the county, the school is known as the Four Corners School or the Kellner’s Corners School, being located in that village.

On June 14, 1849, the McAllister school district purchased the present site from Hiram McAllister. A Frenchman had obtained the land from the Indians. He later sold it to Mr. McAllister. Later Mr. McAllister sold the rest of the farm from which the school site was carved to Henry Eberhardt. He sold it recently to Agon Haupt. Since the district was organized, portions of land have been detached on the south and the east. The district now contains Sections 10 and 14 north of the Manitowoc River, Sections 11 and 13 outside of the present city limits of Manitowoc, and the S 1/2 of Section 12, all in the township of Manitowoc Rapids.

The first school of frame structure was built in 1849 for the sum of $100. The site cost the district $75. By 1891 the first building had served its purpose and was moved to a spot about 500 feet north of the present school site where it has been used for residential purposes ever since. It still stands at the corner across the road from the Novy Tavern. The first school was equipped with benches, tables, blackboards, and large charts.

The second school building, the one being used at present, was built in 1891, and was constructed by contractor Anton Schliesleder for $812. It is a brick building patterned after the fashion of that day. The building lacks the conveniences of a modern rural school, but it does have more than the ordinary school room equipment and teaching aids.

The school began as a one room building and it has always remained a one teacher school up to the present time. During the depression year of 1932-33, when the enrollment was 62, two teachers were employed but it did not become a graded school. In 1879 the enrollment was 85, which was the largest in the history of the school. The school at that time was taught by Oscar Huhn. The average enrollment for the years 1879 to 1889 was 73. Today the average attendance is 47. The decrease in enrollment at present is due to attendance of children in the parochial schools in Manitowoc. The school census of 1945 shows that there were 119 children of school age residing in the district.

Some of the first settlers in the district were the McAllisters, Lenivals, Steelees, Keeneys, Williams, Wieszers, LaCounts, Beckers, Vilas, Shimeks, Salvorsons, Pierces, 128
and the Knopes. They were all farmers except Vilas who had a woolen mill, Pierce who had a saw and grist mill, and the Keeneys who operated a creamery.

The records of the school show that the first school officers in 1849 were Clerk Charles McAllister, Director Hiram McAllister, and Treasurer Francis Lenival. Others who served on the board were Thomas Pipen, 1835; Nicholas Pitz, 1854; Peter Boh, 1854; Giles Hubert, 1855; Peter Petron, 1855; Herman Jarve, 1856; Gust. Hubbard, 1856; and Gordon Stokes, 1858. Recent board members were Henry Eberhardt who had served for 27 years until he resigned to move to Manitowoc, and Henry Specht who is rounding out his 28th year on the board.

The first teacher employed was Chip Burritt. Other teachers of note to teach in this district were Emil Teitgen, a prominent business man in Manitowoc; Timothy Burke, a Member of Congress; Dan Laughlin, a doctor; Lawrence Ledvina, a well-known lawyer and a member of the State Legislature; Peter and Geo. Mittnacht, local railroad operators; and Jos. Voboril, County Superintendent of Schools. In addition, records show that these well-known educators of the 1800's taught in this district: Oscar Huhn, Emma Schneider, John Erickson, F. Westphal, Chas. Werner, Christian Schade, J. W. Wilhelm, W. F. Dudley, Byron J. Price, Chattie Peck, John Hussey, Chas. Shove, Johanna Lueps, and J. A. Koelzer. The names of the leaders who taught in the district since 1906 are to be found in the County School Annuals. The first teachers, as in the other early schools, were hired for either the winter or the summer terms, sometimes both terms. Their pay ranged from $13 to 45 dollars per month.

The school has had thousands of pupils during its 99 years of existence. There are no records indicating who some of the first pupils were and which ones made names for themselves in the local or the outside communities. For the 1900's we have records showing that the Benishke's, the Witts, the Blesers, and the Shimeks have made names for themselves in the teaching profession, in agriculture, and in business.

During the school term of 1903-04, J. W. Wilhelm, the teacher, conducted evening classes for the adults of the district. Every spring when the school term ended, large community picnics were held in the Henry Eberhardt woods. A parade from the school to the picnic grounds was lead by men on horseback, followed by a band, the school children, and the people of the district. In some years the picnics were held in Kummer's Park. A feature of these outings was the hoisting of a flag that was used in many of the Civil War battles. This flag was a possession of the Kummer family.

The district has several places of scenic and of historical interest. The Manitowoc River, winding its way through the deep valley and serving as the western boundary of the district, serves as a recreational area for campers and fishermen. Traces of the grist mill and dam owned by Pierce are found along this river. Kummer's Park is a favorite picnic grounds. The old “Plank Road”, which was one of the important toll turnpikes of the county, runs from Four Corners eastward to the city limits of Manitowoc. This early road was made of planks, a version of our modern concrete highways. Toll was paid the owners for use of the ‘plank road.’

MANITOWOC RAPIDS JT. 10 — BRANCH

Alice L. Taddy

Manitowoc Rapids Joint 10 has almost always been known as the Branch school since it is located a short distance south of the village of Branch.

The boundaries of the district were drawn on January 1, 1855. Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, and all lands north of the Manitowoc river in sections 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, and 19 in Manitowoc Rapids were in the original district. In 1889 the district became joint with the town of Kossuth when pieces of land were taken from Kossuth No. 3. In 1891 and 1892 certain areas were detached from Kossuth 3.
The El\(^2\) of NE\(^4\) of section 31 and the W\(^1\) of NW\(^1\) of section 32 all in Kossuth were added to this district in 1902. In 1912 the NW\(^4\) of the NW\(^1\) of section 33 and the SW\(^1\) of the SW\(^4\) of section 34 in Kossuth were detached and added to this district.

No records are available regarding the first schoolhouse built about 1850, but one can assume that it must have been built shortly after the district was organized. It evidently was a small, crude log building as it was sold in 1879 to Charles Cain for the sum of $10. It is supposed that the building was located on the present site.

Records show that the second schoolhouse was built in 1873 for $785. It was a frame structure. Evidently the furniture from the old school was used, as only $12.50 was listed as expenditures for school equipment for that year. During those early years it was customary to "bank" the schoolhouse in the autumn. Each year the large schoolroom, with its square box stove in the center, was whitewashed. Firewood was furnished annually for about $14. Since there was no school well, it was necessary to pay a nearby resident three dollars yearly for pump use. The task of carrying water was left to some pupil until 1903 when a well was drilled. One can assume that the "water haulers" were well pleased with the new water supply. The many double seats often accommodated three and four pupils. The building erected in 1873 was used until 1906.

A special meeting of the qualified electors of the district was held on September 23, 1905 to consider the erection of a new building. A motion was made and passed that a one room frame structure be erected and that a hot air furnace be used for heating, but at another special meeting called in November of the same year, the voters decided to build a two room school. That building is the one now in use and cost about $3,000. It now has electric lights, a telephone, stoker, and other equipment demanded of second class state graded schools, but it still has outdoor toilets.

Because of a new state law requiring two teachers for enrollments over sixty passed in 1905, the school became a two department school in 1906. In July 1945 the voters at the annual meeting decided to maintain a one department school because of the decreased enrollment. The first principal of the graded school was Chas. Eickhoff with Florence Grover as the primary teacher.

The Branch School has always had a large enrollment until recently. During the 1800's the attendance averaged about 90 pupils. The town clerks records sent to the county superintendent of schools yearly show that the highest enrollment occurred in 1883 when 107 pupils attended. At the time the district voted two departments the attendance was 85. The present enrollment is thirty-four. The decrease in attendance is due to the factors common to rural areas.

Summer and winter terms of school were common until 1876. In August 1870, the voters decided to have a nine month term consisting of a five month winter and a four month summer term. The winter term began in November, while the summer term began in May. The voters also voted for a female teacher for the summer term, but a male teacher was stipulated for the winter. Evidently there was a reason for such decisions! During the early years the length of the school term varied. In 1882 and again in 1884 the voters decided to have only eight months of school yearly. Ten months of school was voted in 1885.

Branch had many old settlers who took an active part in school affairs in addition to their regular businesses. Peter Herman was proprietor of the Custom Flour Mill. F. J. Shaffer was a prominent merchant. Gottfried Kunz owned a brewery and was proprietor of a hotel. Bahr and Wagner owned a creamery and cheese factory. David Sheldon served as town clerk in 1902.

Thousands of pupils have gone forth from this school. Many of them became prominent in the professions, business, and agriculture. A few of the more prominent ones were Frank Meisnest; Chas. Meisnest, who became county superintendent; Fred Meisnest, a professor of German in Washington state university; Arthur Sampe, a dentist in Racine; Florian Stradal, who is secretary-treasurer of the Invincible Mfg. Co.; Randolph Stoehr, manager of a chain of theaters in Michigan; Geo. Stoehr who is with an utility company in the west; and Paula Voelker Clusen who was secretary in the county superintendent of schools office for twenty-five years. This district has supplied many teachers for the county schools. Among the more recent ones were the Huhn girls, Clarence Carbon, Quirin Jung, Olive Kutil, Olivia and Frank Kaderabek, and Earl and Gladys Cherry.

The school board members in 1870 were: Clerk E. B. Lawrence, Treasurer Geo. Lawrence, and Director Norman Pierce. Clerk E. B. Lawrence served from 1870 to 1877. August Brunig, John Meisnest, and Geo. Mittnacht were other clerks during the 1800's. Three generations of the Brunig family have served on the board. August served from 1877 to 1886. Charles served about twenty years, and his son Donald is
the present clerk. One of the duties of the first school boards was to adopt the school textbooks. In January 1876 the board met at the Kunz hotel and adopted the American Education Readers, Swinton’s Word Book, Swinton’s Conduits, Ray’s Arithmetic, Kert’s Geography, and Spenverlin’s Copy Book.

Many prominent teachers of their time were hired to teach the Branch school. The average salary of about forty dollars per month was above the county average. Teachers of whom there are records were: Mary Shove, Wm. Earles, Chas. J. Shove, Ed. Finnegan, V. B. Sheldon, Melora Shove, Viroqua Sheldon, Emil Teitgen, W. C. Sieker, L. A. Baumann, J. S. Laughlin, M. M. Guhin, and Christ Schade. The subjects taught were not so different from those of today. Science was taught as nature study. In spring and fall all day sessions were often held in the woods to study nature.

The school has served as a community center. Evening programs and debates on the second Friday of each month were common. These attracted adults from near and far. The old time spelling matches were also held. Arbor Day was celebrated yearly by planting trees and shrubs. The weeping willow and many of the schoolyard trees were planted on that day. The annual school picnics are recalled by the older residents. They were held at Shaffer’s hall and were an all day affair.

Branch was once known as Lenival, a thriving town of many industries. Farmers floated logs down the river to several sawmills in the village. The hamlet also had at one time a hotel, a shoe shop, a grist mill, a brewery, a shingle mill, and two blacksmith shops. Years ago there was a large boarding house not far from the school for the mill workers. In 1893 a part of the village was laid out in lots. The grist mill and brewery burned down. Other buildings were torn down, while one blacksmith shop closed down because of lack of business. Few ruins of the mills now remain.

The cemetery across from the school is the final resting place of many of the old settlers. A small church north of the school has been torn down and a house erected in its place. The Branch and Manitowoc rivers are of scenic and historical interest. Indians camped at the juncture of the two rivers. Today the two streams provide recreation in the form of picnic grounds and fishing holes for nearby and county residents.

MANITOWOC RAPIDS 11 — HILLSIDE

LaVerne Manlick

When anyone spoke about the Gustaven son school in the past, county residents knew that reference was made to Manitowoc Rapids district No. 11 school. It was referred to by that name because it is located across the road from the Gustaveson homestead. It was also in later years referred to as the River Road school because it is located along the so-called River Road. In 1918, the people named it the Hillside School because it is situated on the side of a hill.

Manitowoc Rapids No. 11 was organized for school purposes about 1849 or 1850, but it was not until October 17, 1853, that the northwest corner of the N.W.1/4 of the N.E.3/4 of section 20, Manitowoc Rapids, containing 13 square rods, was purchased for a school site for the sum of $14. To this original site was added one-third of an acre in 1938, purchased from Andrew Jacobson for $50. There is no written record why this became school district No. 11. It is supposed that it was the eleventh school district set up in Manitowoc county, but there is no official proof of this.

The first log school was built shortly after the pioneer settlers came into this area. The building was small and furnished with homemade, plank seats and desks about 3 ½ to 4 ½ feet in height and 5 to 7 feet long. Each child had a slate and slate pencil which he or she guarded carefully because these slates had to last for years! During the winter months, the older boys and girls crowded the little school. There

131
were no slate blackboards. The world, to these pioneer pupils, was made up of Manitowoc county and the United States because those were the only maps in school. The crude homemade teacher’s desk is still found in the district and was used by the teachers until the year 1914. After the old log building had outlived its usefulness, it was torn down and some of the materials used to build the new school.

The second school was erected in 1873 at the cost of about $500 and was located on the same site as was the old log building. This building, as remodeled in 1930, is still in use today. In 1873 this frame building was about 24 x 32 feet without a basement. It had windows on three sides with the south wall used to hang the old wooden blackboards. The entrance door opened into a small hall from which doors opened into cloakrooms which were a part of the classroom. The old homemade seats and desks were replaced with manufactured double desks and seats. An old box stove was later replaced with a heating and ventilating system placed in the northeast corner of the schoolroom. The woodshed, at first located near the school, was later attached to the schoolhouse so as to make it “handy” for the teacher. A large movable bookcase was used to store the library and text books.

In 1833, the district residents voted to improve the Hillside school through W. P. A. aids at a cost of about $3,500 to the district. The building was placed on a full basement which houses fuel, storage, furnace, and playrooms. The windows in the east wall were doubled and all the windows for the classroom placed in the west wall. The two windows to the front were retained to light the partitioned cloakrooms. An entrance shed was constructed from which a door opens to a basement stairway. Straight ahead of the entrance door, steps lead to a small landing from which three doors open. Two of these doors lead to the cloakrooms — one at each corner, and one door leads directly into the schoolroom. Each cloakroom also has a door leading directly into the classroom. The blackboards are placed along the east wall with the pupils facing that direction in comfortable single, adjustable seats and desks. The building is modernly equipped with a piano, radio, steel filing case, worktable, chairs, maps, reference books, etc. The school is modern except for indoor lavatories and running water.

During the decades when summer and winter sessions were held, the number of children attending was high. In 1870, the town clerk’s report to the county superintendent shows that 91 pupils out of 112 children of school age attended the little log school. That figure, no doubt, is the sum total of the two sessions for the year. After single terms were established in the 1880’s, the enrollment was about 50 out of 125 children in the district. By 1890, the attendance had again gone up to over 70 and remained there until the 1900’s when between 40 and 50 attended yearly. Since this district is not affected greatly by parochial schools, the average yearly enrollment now is between 20 and 25 out of a school census of about 70 children.

Wm. Sawyer, who settled in this district in 1848, was one of the pioneers. Others who settled here at about the same time were: Osten Torrison, Jon Johnson, Tosten Knutson, Ole Paulson, and Jens Hansen. The 1866 assessment roll lists Wyman Murphy, Chas. Gustavson, Even Gjerulfsen, S. Ossofsen, Osl Terkelson, L. Norboc, Torjus Kostel, J. Lantry, Chas. Solberg, Amun Torgusen, Issac Erickson, Hans Gunderson, John Olsen, Andre Onunsen, Thos. Anderson, Chas. Bull, Moses Tufts, Peter Kelser, and Wm. Back as land owners in this district. The above names indicate very clearly that this was a Norwegian settlement. John Gunderson established a lumber camp on the river. Captain Gustavson, a veteran of the Civil War, went to this school. Some of the older residents vaguely remember the return of the Civil War veterans. They recall being in school and seeing the veterans come marching up the road. No “school” for the rest of the day! The hundreds and hundreds of former pupils have become prominent in local, county, and state affairs. Among the families producing teachers were the Wigen, Terkelson, Vogel, Brehmer, and Geraldson names. Gretina Terkelson became supervising teacher of Manitowoc county.

The voters of the old River Road school elected the leading citizens of the district as school officers and kept them in office for many three year terms. The first clerk of whom there is a county record was John S. Tufts who served before 1872. Chas. Gustavson served from 1873 to about 1890, G. Gunderson from 1890 to 1905, and Sever Turkelson from 1906 to 1914. Others on the school board before 1906 were Peter Terkelson, John Gunderson, Christ Hanson, and Otto Seestedt.

The list of teachers is incomplete. Teachers usually stayed only one year evidently because the salary paid was below that of surrounding districts. It was not until Dave Fitzgerald taught this school that salaries comparable with Branch and Rapids were paid according to county records. The policy during the last 30 or 40
years has been to get and keep the best teachers for long tenures. Teachers who taught this school before 1906 as listed in the teacher's book in the county office were: Eliza Allen 1872 S, Mary Hubbard 1872 and 73 winters, Jennie Mickelson 1873 S, Anna Gustaveson 1874 S, Aurelia Lawrence 1874 W, Mary L. Shove 1875, Byron Oakley 1876 and 1878, Melora Shove 1877, Ella Edwards 1879, David Fitzgerald 1894-7, T. E. Thompson 1898, Louis Ahlswede 1904, Anton Knutson 1905, and Celia McCarthy 1906.

In 1875, according to P. N. Terkelson, the texts used were Sander's readers and spellers. The principal classes were spelling, reading, arithmetic, and geography. Later on grammar and history were added to the course of study. Today the eight grades enrolled have a total of 28 classes daily.

Community gatherings were common at the turn of the century. These consisted of spelling bees, singing school, tableaus, debates, and school fairs. Debates by district residents were carried on during the time of Dave Fitzgerald. In the 1920's and 1930's when town and county contests were popular, Hillside school had many town and county winners. Today the community uses the school for 4-H Club and Homemakers' meetings. Mrs. Morton Geraldson, a district resident, was chosen state president of the Homemakers for 1947.

The Manitowoc river provides scenic and recreational areas for district and county residents. Murphy's mill along this river was one of the early business places. Frank Hein's tavern and hotel was destroyed by fire about 1900. Prior to 1912, there was no bridge between Branch and this community. People wishing to cross the river at Wettenkamps had to do so by fording. Another old landmark in this district is the Wettenkamp tavern located a half mile west of the school on the River Road. Today this community has become one of the prosperous farming areas of Manitowoc county, vitally interested in the problem of rural education.