



Front Row - Left to Right: Josephine Donovan, Irene Donovan, Grace McMachen
Bernice Latimer, Teresa O'Meara, Mary O'Meara, Borden Gard
Back Row - Left to Right: Vincent O'Meara, Jay Donovan, Alphonse Donovan,
Xavier Donovan, Teacher - Margherita Fleming, Verna Halladay,
Vincent Donovan, Lambert O'Meara, John O'Meara

COON'S SCHOOL - HARTSGRAVEL ROAD - 1877-1967

by J.J. O'Meara
Elgin 1986

Coon's School is located on Hartsgravel Road, a short distance northeast of Coon's Corner. It is a red brick building, now a residence occupied by Allen Gard and family.

This picture was taken on the north side of the school (circa 1923). The teacher in the picture is Margherita Fleming, daughter of Kate and Charlie Fleming. At this time the Fleming family resided in Elgin, in the home now occupied by Marion Steacy.

The first school on Hartsgravel Road was a log building on the opposite side of the road. The red brick building was built in the year 1877 on land donated by Noah Ripley and Cardiff. The line between these two lots was directly behind the school. It was a Union School Section, taking in a part of South Crosby and Bastard townships - S.S.#14 - and originally covered eighteen farmholdings. The school operated over a period of ninety years, closing in the year 1967.

In the early days the teacher boarded around the neighbourhood and this was included in the salary. Later, but before the automobile became popular, the teachers used some novel means of transportation. Evva Halladay, of Halladay's Corners, rode a bicycle and taught for a yearly salary of two hundred dollars. Jimmie Moriarity of Newboro rode on the B. & W. to Nolan's crossing on Hartsgravel Road where the train slowed down enough for him to hop off each morning and the same for the return trip in the evening.

In later years, when I was attending school, Clifford Beach of Philipville rode horseback daily, stabling his horse in Coon's barn. He came complete with riding breeches, leggings and spurs and jingled-jangled up and down the aisles all day.

Jimmie Shea, another teacher, lived in Delta and in the summer season, rowed a boat across Delta lake to Coon's shore and walked from there to school, a distance of almost two miles.

The name of the road, Hartsgravel, was open to question by some of the residents. The late Osmond Coon, a life long resident of the community, once told me that for some time he always considered the name to be "Hardscrabble" Road, so named because of the nature of the area and the fact that it was difficult to eke out a living from the soil. He also stated that Hartsgravel Road ended at Coon's Corner and from there to Halladay's Corners was named "Caseknife Street".

John Godkin, a maternal grandfather of John Eyre, often spoke of the Harts, one of the pioneer families and it is generally conceded now that the road was named in their memory.

As you can see from this picture, bare feet were very much in vogue in those summer days. A few of the older girls wore shoes, but none of the boys. You could run much faster barefooted and run we did! To and from school was almost always a foot race. Later I acquired a pair of shoes and went back to teach in the same school from 1933-1936.

JJO'M.

(Thanks to Mrs. Daisy Coon for the use of some of her notes)

The Lantern expresses thanks to Mr. O'Meara for this interesting "Focus".

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