

A Century of Fond Memories

THE OLD CHESHIRE SCHOOL.

How well I remember The old school by the rill,
And across the flowing rivulet, Stood the red Ketchum mill.

That old shop on the corner, Run by A. and A. Van Wie
Is a place I can remember, When at recess we were free.

That mill pond, where in winter We used our sleds and skate,
And in summer went in swimming, Dressing made us always late.

There are many I remember, I would like to see once more,
Some departed, some remaining, Some have crossed to that bright shore.

And thus began a poem written by Jedediah Ward in ca 1859, long time Cheshire resident Virginia Miser's grandfather. At the time it was penned, the "Old Cheshire School" (District #5) was the first building on the north side of Bunnell Road just behind the "old blacksmith shop", and just east of the creek that flows along the back of the homes facing the Canandaigua-Naples Road (NYS Route 21).

During those days there were several other district schools in the Cheshire area - District #6 was on the north side of Goodale Road, just west of the Smith Road intersection; District #8 was on Middle Cheshire Road, just west of the Foster Road intersection; and District #18 on the south side of Nott Road, a little west of NYS Route 21. The years that these four schools were built is not exactly known, but as early as 1812 the State of New York had mandated public education to at least Grade 6. Thus it is assumed that these "old" school houses were built between 1812 and the Civil War.

"Outside the village proper there were many rural one room schools which were later incorporated into the Canandaigua school system. Although the common school system was undoubtedly an improvement over earlier arrangements, one can see from the reports of the trustees that many of the deficiencies of the previous schools still remained. By 1875, efforts were underway to consolidate and improve public education." (200 years of learning, 1791-1991 Canandaigua Schools)

According to the 1904 Ontario County Atlas, sometime after 1874, the "Old Cheshire School" had been replaced by a two story wooden structure on Keister Street in the hamlet, just east of NYS Route 21. In addition, in 1906, after 87 years of use, the "Little White Schoolhouse" on West Lake Road (District #9) was rebuilt and the new

school, in a book published in 1913 by the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University, was considered "a model as to how rural schools can be modernized".

After considerable community discussion, the decision was made to replace the four district schools in the Cheshire area with a modern school, and by the end of 1915, the Cheshire Union became a reality. Those previously mentioned district schoolhouses united to become the Cheshire Union with the construction of a modern, advanced school at the intersection of the Canandaigua-Naples Rd. and Woolhouse Road.

The school had four rooms on the upper level; encompassing 8 grades, with four teachers. Since the school was replacing four district schools it fell to their responsibility to divide the new school into the four classes. Those teachers were Florence Standish (#5), Louise Rossier (#6), Anna Bowlan (#8) and Irma Woods (#18). Anna Bowlan and Irma Woods taught for a number of years. Louise Rossier married Will Druschel in 1920 and after a few years left to start a family. There is no further record of Florence Standish after the consolidation.

There was a full basement with indoor bathrooms. There was a woodworking shop. Stuart Patterson was the shop teacher as well as the band director. Nellie Phillips was the chorus director.

Over the years there were a number of teachers whose names became easily remembered by the many Cheshire area residents who were proud to say they had attended school here. In 1927 the teachers were Lila Kinnear, L. N. VanAuken, Gertrude Douglass, and Clara L. Colf. Lila Kinnear and Gertrude Douglas taught into the early 1940's while Mrs. Clara Colf taught at least until 1945. When the first band started in 1936, Miss Barbara Brown was the teacher. In later years names that came to mind were Stuart Patterson (1938), Catherine Styles, a Miss Howes (1942). a Miss Howard (1943), a Mrs. Shay (1944), Mr. Hewitt (1947), Mrs. Herendeen (1949 - 1952), Don Jones(1951), Mr. Carl (1953), Mrs. Herrington (1954).

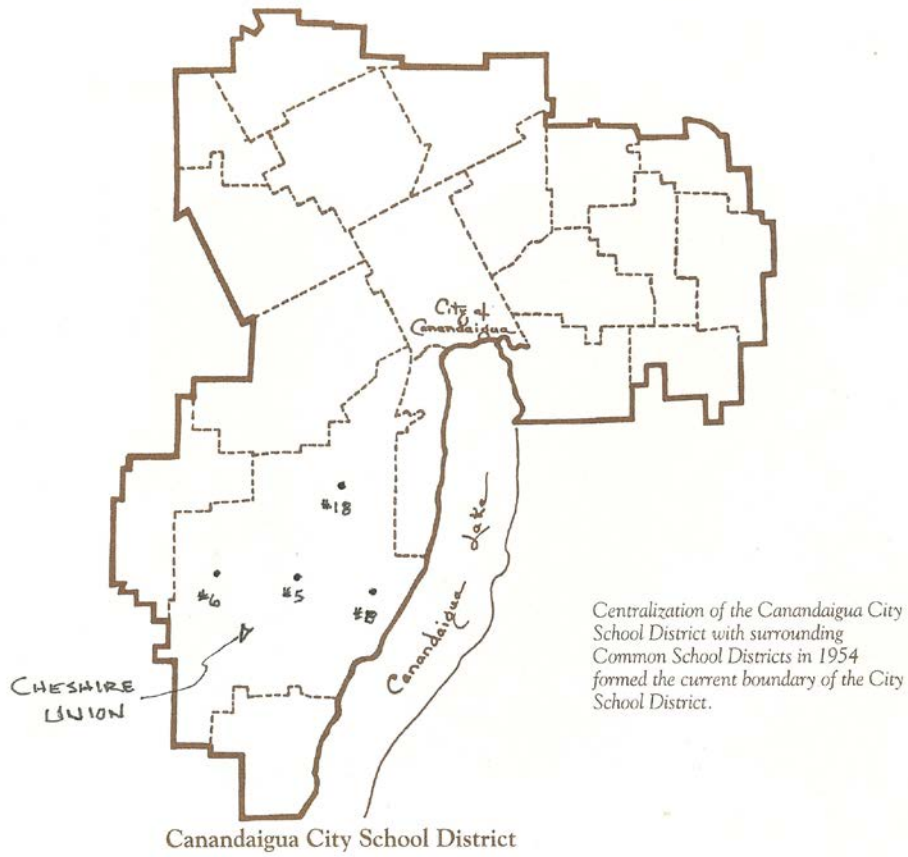
The first years of Centralization (1954 -1955). the board of directors for the Cheshire Union School at that time consisted of Bramon Fox, Albert Rogers, and Howard Mansfield. For nearly forty years the school had served the community as a consolidated school and it would continue to operate for several years. In the spring of 1957 residents of the Cheshire district petitioned the Board of Education to permit students residing in that district the option of attending either Cheshire or the Elementary school. That request was approved, but over time as enrollment continued to decrease, the number of classes served also decreased and subsequently the school was closed.

The building remained empty for more than twenty years while the City School district decided what to do with it. After several failures to sell the property by auction or by sealed bids for the asking price of not less than \$20,000, the school district accepted a somewhat lesser offer from John and Barb Rose who operated the "Company Store" at the site of the old Mallory/Stinardo Store next to the Academy Grange just down the street. After installing a grocery and deli to the south of the first floor and operating it very successfully, it was purchased by Brundage Real Estate, LLC, and continues operating a well run establishment.

In addition to the first floor market/deli, the original four school rooms on the upper level have been historically maintained as an antique store called the "Cheshire Union gift shop and Antique Center" where you can enjoy shopping for a variety of crafts, showcased artwork and local products. A focal point is the building's front entrance that is graced with many photographs of old school memories that are on display throughout the year.

And so, here's wishing this grand old building, the CHESHIRE UNION, a HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY!

Resources: "Memories of the Heart" by Ray Henry 2006
"200 Years of Learning, 1791-1991, Canandaigua Schools" by the 1990
Bicentennial Committee
Miscellaneous District Attendance Records of District #5, donated by Liza
Barnum
The Cheshire Union Yearbook by the Cheshire Historical Committee 2006
Miscellaneous Daily Messenger Articles



The Cheshire Union



Keister Street School - November 1915-Louise Rossier (Teacher)



A class in 1949 - Mrs. Herendeen, teacher



1927 teachers - Lila Kinear, L.N.VanAuken, Gertrude Douglass, Clara L. Colf



Simon Wheeler's School Bus - ca 1929