#8 School — Town of Sweden

References in the Brockport-Republic newspapers from October, 1877 and October, 1883 indicate that school number eight was called the Octagon School. For example:

"The octagon school house needs a few clapboards and some paint."

"Miss **Hattie Ellis** has been engaged to teach school in the octagon schoolhouse."

"No. 8 Sweden, octagon school house—about 15 present. **Foster Udell** was Chairman. Officers elected—**William Humphrey**, Trustee; **Harris Holmes**, Clerk; **Thomas Cheney**, Collector; **D. G. Sheldon**, librarian."

Rural Schools And Three R's; Remember 'em

—A.B. Elwell [transcribed by Sue Savard from]: Brockport-Republic; Thursday, August 12, 1954; p.6 ? http://news.nnyln.net/brockport-republic/brockport-republic-1953-october-1956-november/brockport-republic-1953-october-1956-november%20-%200346.pdf

Therein **A. B. Elwell** describes the years during which he attended the Octagon School:

"Let us now investigate these district schools of one room that were located near Brockport some 60 or 70 years ago. I will start with my home district, No. 8 on the Fourth Section Rd.

It was in the year of 1882 that I started attending what was then an octagon building. The late **Mae King** was my teacher. First, I would like to describe this very old schoolhouse. It was clapboarded over plank sides and had a rectangular woodshed attached. Between the main building and the shed was the entry and at the far end of the entry was a shelf for the water pail (I have very good reasons to remember this particular part of the building, as I will state later).

On one side of the woodshed was an opening about five feet from the ground to throw wood and coal through. If we arrived ahead of the teacher we would raise up the slide and enter by boosting each other, the largest boy climbing last without aid.

All sides of the schoolroom were wainscoted, the wide boards running horizontal and painted gray. Seven of the

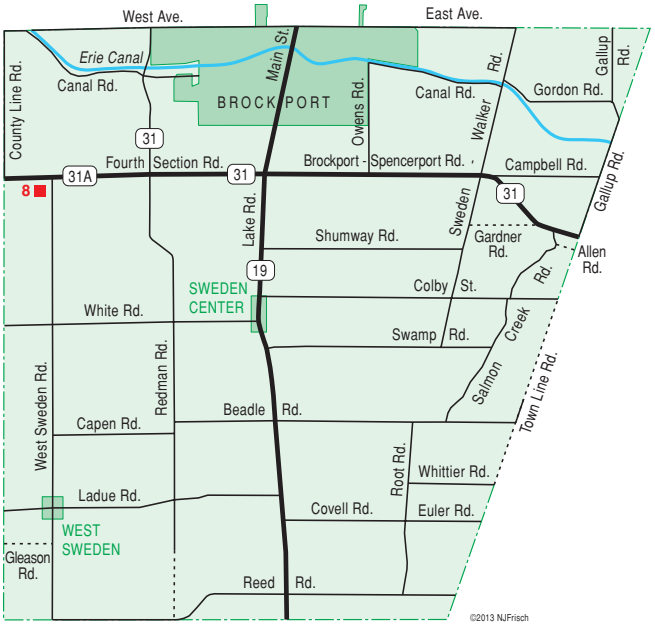


Fig. 1: Location of #8 school in red.

sides were plastered above the wainscoting and the side back of the teacher's desk supported the blackboard. Desks or benches as they were then called were constructed of broad, white wood boards by the carpenter who built the building. These desks were of bare wood, no finish or decorations except the carving of initials by the pupils.

It was very difficult for the writer to adjust himself to school discipline that first year. The ruler was applied three different times to the palm of the hand for saying, "I won't" when asked to do some small task. This punishment always took place in the school entry which I have mentioned previously. I wonder what is done in such cases today? I will say we never heard of the term—"juvenile delinquency" in those early days. Such matters were taken care of at the beginning of wrong doings, so you did not continue to worse behavior.

I will name here those, who are known by the writer to be living, who attended that octagon school: **Leland Sheldon** of Snyder; **Frank Udell** and his sister, **Mrs. George Jewett**, both residing in Florida; **Miss Jessie Holland** and **Henry Good** of Sweden; **William Elwell**; **Mrs. Stella King**, and the writer, of Brockport.

Mrs. Stella King had a record of this school district from its beginning, which made very interesting reading. I believe she has turned it over to the Seymour Museum. It seems the

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firewood was furnished by the families who sent children to school. The amount was determined by the number of children sent to school by that particular family.

A lady teacher was hired for the three months of summer at $10 a month. Then a man teacher took over at $15 a month for the remaining three months. There were two reasons for this arrangement It was necessary to have a man teacher in the winter months as the large boys were then in school. In summer the large boys worked on the farms. The second reason was that by having a lady teacher in summer $15 was saved to the district. The low prices stated for all work and material used on the school property were proportionately low compared with the present.

A later school building on the site has been converted into a dwelling and is the home of **Mr.** and **Mrs. Arthur Knab**."

NOTE: An exhaustive search of the books, ledgers, diaries, and papers in the Emily Knapp Museum has failed to uncover the Stella King diary. It would be invaluable in shedding light on education in our one-room schoolhouses from a teacher's perspective. —Sue Savard

Barry Hartman interview

—Sue Savard; ?day, December ?, 2013

In 1846, the land for the school was deeded to **Lewis Edmonds**, and the trustees of District Number 8 in the Towns of Sweden and Clarkson. Before 1825 or 26, farms were all around the area.

The area was swamp land which was filled in order to build the school. The land given to the district by **Lewis Edmonds** was originally two parcels, and it took quite some time for the school district to get a deed to the second parcel. My home sits on the same site as the original Octagon School.

During the war, the home sat vacant for about five years.

The schoolhouse and land were sold to **Arthur and Florence Knab** in 1951 and converted into a home. In 1952, an attached one-car garage was added.

The building had a stone foundation until 1950 when the **Knabs** lifted the building and had a poured foundation constructed. Unfortunately, they hit a spring and the basement is frequently damp. **Mr. Knab** was a farmer and school bus driver.

My wife, ***Bonnie***, and I purchased the land and home in 1975 and built a detached garage on the southwest corner of the property in 1976. Again, in 1986, we added an attached garage, a deck, and remodeled the interior of the home. I currently own one acre.

As I understand it, there was a covered bridge on the County Line Road which was torn down and the timbers used to build the schoolhouse. If you look at the beams in my cellar, you will see that the beams are numbered.

Many of the trees surrounding the property were planted on Arbor Day by the school children. The tree outside my kitchen window was planted in 1926.

When I purchased the house, there were only three rooms. I added the garage and upstairs rooms. The hallway contains the original floor from the woodshed. The living room and computer room also have original flooring. If you look closely, you can still see the markings where the students' desks were screwed into the wood. (see Fig. 2, floor plan)

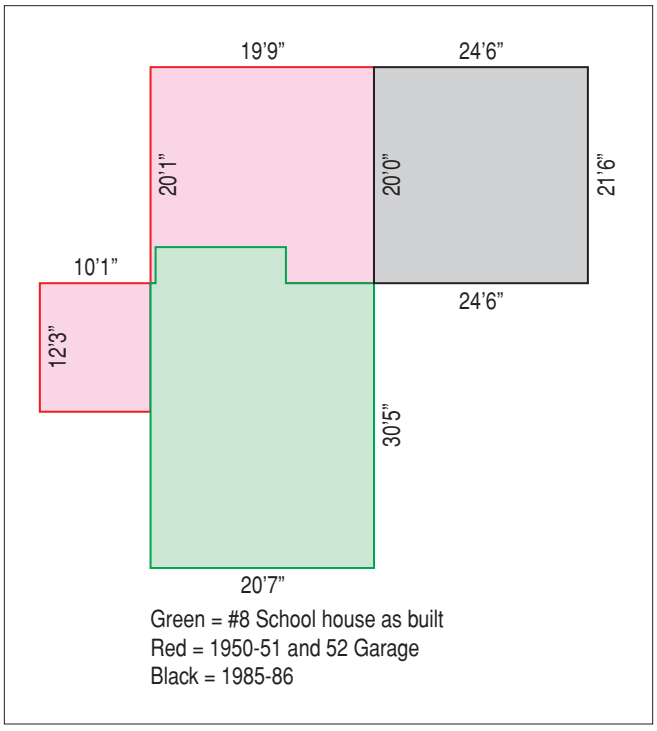


Fig. 2: 2013 floor plan of what was #8 school.

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Provenance

Fig. 1: Map: ©2013 Norman Frisch
Fig. 2: Floor plan: Courtesy of Barry Hartman

Production notes:

Fig. 2: Floor plan redrawn in Adobe©Illustrator from Mr. Hartman's sketch.