

THE HISTORY OF THE APTAKISIC-TRIPP SCHOOL

The first white men to journey through Illinois were Father Marquette and Louis Joliet, who arrived in 1673, LaSalle and Father Hennepin in 1679, and Tonti in 1680. Illinois was claimed by the French until the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, when it was taken by the English. During the Revolutionary War, George Rogers Clark and his American soldiers drove the English from the territory and England was forced to give up her claim by the Treaty of 1783. During these years there were settlements in Southern Illinois, but no white men lived in the area now known as Lake County.

Daniel Wright, the first white settler in Lake County, was born in Rutland, Vermont. He served as Captain in the Vermont Militia during the War of 1812. In 1833, he arrived in Chicago where he stayed for just a short time. Leaving Chicago with his wife, several children, two oxen and a cow, he followed the Aux Plaines River (now known as the Des Plaines River) to the Town of Maine and then continued on north.

When Daniel Wright reached the area now known as Vernon Township, he was greeted by the Potawatomi Indians and their Chief, Metawa. In June, 1834, the Indians helped him build a 20 ft. x 20 ft. log cabin on the N.W. quarter of Section 26, about 600 feet south of Aptakisic Road on Milwaukee Avenue which was then an Indian trail. This was the first homestead in Lake County. In 1909 the Lake County Historical Society placed a commemorative stone near the location of the original log cabin.

In September of 1834, Daniel Wright suffered great loss; his wife and young son died within three days of each other. These were the first deaths in Lake County. Daniel Wright died on December 30, 1873, and is buried in the Half Day Cemetery.

Hiram Kennicott, a member of a famous family of physicians and lawyers, came to Lake County in 1834, shortly after the arrival of Daniel Wright. He opened a general store, grist mill and saw mill on the Des Plaines River and Indian Creek, now known as Half Day. Mr. Kennicott was the first Justice of the Peace in Lake County. A few years later he performed the first wedding ceremony in Lake County, uniting Caroline Wright, the daughter of Daniel Wright, and William Whigham.

The first election in Lake County was held in the home of Mr. Kennicott on June 1, 1837.

Other pioneers followed Daniel Wright and Hiram Kennicott, and helped settle Vernon Township, which was named after Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington.

William Cooley built his home on the Des Plaines River, in "The Grove". He bought oxen from drovers in southern Illinois and, after breaking them, sold them to the settlers.

Theron Parsons settled in Half Day and kept a temperance house. A few years later he left and traveled farther west.

The first Post Office in Lake County was opened in Half Day in 1836, Seth Washburn serving as the Postmaster.

The first school in Lake County began in 1836, with Laura B. Sprague, as the teacher. The log school house was also used for church services. Half Day was one of four preaching stations in Lake County, with one preacher, Mr. Wilcox, serving all four pulpits.

In 1844, a church was built in Half Day. The land was given to the Middlesex Congregational Church by Seth Washburn in 1840. The Long Grove German United Evangelical Lutheran Reformed Church was formed in 1846 and the first church building was completed and dedicated in April of 1848. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was organized in Buffalo Grove in 1847.

The first town meeting, under township organization, was held in April of 1850, in the Half Day Church. All town meetings and elections were held here until 1954.

"Sun at the meridian", "high noon", and "half day", in Indian language mean Aptakee. Aptakistic was named after Indian Chief Aptakee, and was given this name at the completion of the Wisconsin Central Railroad in approximately 1885. The railroad played an important part in making Aptakistic a trading center. The farmers in the area brought their milk to the depot in the morning for delivery to Chicago; the empty cans were returned on the afternoon train. Children rode the milk train to and from Des Plaines, where they attended high school.

The Aptakistic Buffalo Grove Road was known as Frillman Street and the Aptakistic Long Grove Road was known as Butterfly Avenue.

Aptakistic was an up and coming town. Mr. George Weidner and Mr. Nick Volz built a warehouse and sold farm supplies and equipment to the farmers. This building still stands. Mr. Volz sold his share in the business to J. N. Busch in 1893. Then Peter Weidner and Volz built a warehouse farther south down the railroad track, near the switch, and in 1884 this warehouse burned to the ground.

A blacksmith shop owned and operated by August Pieper, was located on what is now Depot Place. There was a harness shop, and an ice house where ice cut from the Des Plaines River was stored during the summer months. This building was used for this purpose until 1916, was vacated and burned in the summer of 1919.

In 1889, George Weidner opened a general store in Aptakistic and on July 29, 1889, the Aptakistic Post Office was established in his store. Mr. Weidner was the Postmaster. The following year the Express began, running from Aptakistic through Buffalo Grove and Long Grove. On June 14, 1904, the Post Office was discontinued in Mr. Weidner's store, and all the mail was sent through the Prairie View Post Office.

Another store was operated in the home of Mrs. J. N. Busch.

There were many community activities in Aptakisic. The Aptakisic Club organized in the early 1890's. The Aptakisic Band was formed in 1894, with Henry Weidner as Bandmaster. They practiced above the blacksmith shop until the completion of the Aptakisic Hall, which was built to hold community meetings, dances, etc. Dances were held twice a month.

About 1890, John N. Busch started a lumber yard where the present yard is located. The lumber yard was operated by Mr. Busch and his daughter, Emma, until her marriage to Emil Geest. Mr. Geest worked in the lumber yard and in 1913 purchased the business from Mr. Busch. The present yard is now operated by Glenn and Ray Miller, grandsons of Emil Geest. The business has been carried on by descendants of John Busch for four generations in the same location. Part of the original building is still being used, but has been enlarged and remodeled. The Wheeling Geest Lumber and Coal Company was incorporated in 1950.

The Weiland greenhouses were built in 1927 by the late George Weiland and are now being operated by his sons and grandson. They specialize in carnations, mums and snapdragons and sell wholesale only.

In 1925, Nicholas Pope purchased the 130 acre Nickols farm from the River Forest State Bank. In 1926, he subdivided this land into 469 tracts and called it Horatio Gardens, naming it after his law partner. All the streets in Horatio Gardens are named after friends and relatives of Mr. Pope. The first home was built for Del Guidice.

In 1953, John Pekara, Sr., purchased 158 acres of land on the west side of Milwaukee Avenue, south of Deerfield Road. It was known as Pekara Subdivision and later changed to Deerfield Manor. All the streets in Deerfield Manor are named after trees.

A group of men known as the School Board of Trustees of Vernon Township met on April 9, 1842, for the purpose of dividing the township into school districts. Five districts were formed and this area was in District 2. Grange Brace, Rufus Soals and N. F. Barber were appointed as School Directors of District 2 on November 19, 1842. From 1842 through 1867 the boundary lines of the districts were changed many times. This area was eventually divided into two districts, District 2 and District 4. In 1901, The Aptakisic School was in District 102 and the Tripp School in District 104.

The first school in Aptakisic was built on the north bank of the creek, just south of Busch Road, and was called the Gosser School. In 1902, a new school house was built on Aptakisic Buffalo Grove Road, just south of the Aptakisic Long Grove Road. Mr. George Weidner purchased the bell for the school for the sum of \$8.00. This building was remodeled in 1934.

The Vernon Public School was built in approximately 1847. The exact location is unknown, although it is believed to be in the area of the Tripp School building on Milwaukee Avenue. Job Tripp, who was a member of the School Board, donated a piece of land for the new school. Information was not available as to the date the school was built, but it is known that the school was named after Job Tripp. In December, 1922, the School Board purchased additional land from Everett Milliard, who agreed to sell to the school 10 rods of frontage and 20 rods deep for the sum of \$500, if the school would release 20 feet of the land on the south side of the school. He wanted this land for a road. Since part of the school building was on the property sold to Mr. Milliard, a basement was made and the school was moved.

A Register of Attendance, Scholarship and Department, dating back to April 27, 1878, is the oldest record available from the Tripp School. Dora A. Bailey was the teacher. A Township Treasurer's Statement, dating back to April 1, 1889, indicates that Kate Slusser was the teacher at that time.

On April 25, 1955, Districts 102 and 104 consolidated. A Board of Education, consisting of the following, were elected: C. P. Jankowski, Lydia Jesse, Henry Koch, George Leikam, Francis Weiland, Edward Welzen and Walter M. Wolf. Classes were held in both the Aptakisic and Tripp Schools. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades were in the Aptakisic School and the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades in the Tripp School.

The community was growing very rapidly and the enrollment increased tremendously. On September 23, 1955, the Board of Education discussed the necessity of building a new school with at least six classrooms. On April 14, 1956, a referendum was held and the people voted on the site for the school and a \$150,000.00 bond issue.

The land, consisting of 10.3 acres, was purchased from J. Frank Graf, of Harvard, Illinois. Ekstrand, Schäd and West, Architects, Waukegan, Illinois, drew up the plans for the new school and O. W. Potter and Sons, Wauconda, Illinois, was awarded the general contract. Construction began in the fall of 1956.

At the opening of school in September of 1956, it was found that the Aptakisic and Tripp Schools were not large enough to house all the pupils enrolled. Therefore, a small building in the rear of the E. Leube residence on Aptakisic Road, was rented, where the 7th and 8th grades were taught.

On September 3, 1957, the new Aptakisic-Tripp School was ready for session.

The old Aptakisic School and the old Tripp School were sold on the auction block. The Aptakisic School was purchased by Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Kritlow, and the Tripp School was purchased by Willie Necker.

The above information appeared in a pamphlet prepared by Art and Lydia Jesse, which was given to all attending the Open House of the new Aptakisic-Tripp School, in October of 1957. Information was obtained from the Chicago Public Library, Waukegan Library, Libertyville Library, a book written about the Wisconsin Central Railroad, a book about the doings of the School Board of Trustees of Vernon Township dating back to 1836, Attendance Records and Minutes of both the Aptakisic and Tripp Schools dating back to 1865, a diary by Mr. George Weidner (this information was given to us by Mrs. Leo Blocks and Mrs. Ralph Halvorsen, daughters of George Weidner), information gathered by Mrs. Esther Payne, who taught at the Aptakisic School for many years, the Illinois Historical Society of Springfield, Illinois, and Mr. Ollie Wolf and Mr. George Ward, who gave us much information pertaining to the Tripp School.