

Preserving our Culture, Arts & Heritage

History of Cherry Hill School

Cherry Hill School was originally located on the west side of Ridge Road, south of Cherry Hill Road, across from the Cherry Hill Church.

It was built in the 1830's and was originally a log building. It had a long low stove which provided heat. The building was 21 feet by 24 feet in size. Around the sides were two rows of slabs held up by pegs. The lower row of slabs were seats and the upper row was the desks. Slates were used instead of text books. The small children sat up front, the older children in the back.

In winter the temperature varied and it was often as cold as 40 degrees. Country schools educated the first through eighth grades plus kindergarten in one room. The older children helped the younger children with their studies. Children brought books from home to read, usually a Bible or an almanac, or the used the famous "McGuffey Reader." The school teacher usually lived with several families throughout the school year, the room and board

being part of the salary they were paid.

Each of the one room schools were a district unto themselves. Cherry Hill School was "Fractional District 1, Canton and Superior" - which means the district included children within a two-mile radius of the school, including Cherry Hill Village, and some students in Superior Township. Community activity was centered around the school, hosting spelling and writing bees, dramas and sing-along's. Church services were held in the building when the temperature outside was too cold. In the summer, the school grounds were often used for community picnics.

The present building was built in 1876 - to replace the old



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log cabin school, at the present location of 50545 Cherry Hill Road. It is an "Italianate" style building, indicated by the decorative brackets under the eaves and the arched window frames. The school is built of "soft fired" bricks, made from the clay soils in Canton, and fired in a nearby "brick kiln" at a local farm. The school is surrounded by old Maple trees, which were planted to celebrate the country's centennial anniversary.



In 1942, Henry Ford and the Edison Institute took over Cherry Hill School. Ford was active in the area with the Ford Farm on Gotfredson Road, and his latest "Village Industry" at the corner of Cherry Hill and Ridge Roads. Ford made \$20,000 worth of improvements to the school which added another room, indoor plumbing, a new roof, central heating and a basement. He brought specialized teachers in to teach industrial arts, home economics and music. The children were given medical and dental services through Henry Ford Hospital, and were taken regularly to Greenfield Village. When Henry Ford died in 1945, the school was returned to the local district authority; however, the Edison Institute continued to hold an interest in the property legally.

In 1955, the Cherry Hill School Board voted to "annex" Cherry Hill to the Plymouth School District. The school was to remain open, but by the early 1960's the school was closed, and children were bused to more "modern" schools in the district.

Cherry Hill had several users over the next twenty years before it finally became "dead storage" for the school district. It remained closed and in deteriorating condition until the mid 1980's when Canton Township bought the school back from the Plymouth-Canton School District, and began renovations. A complete overhaul was done on the building, and in 1988 it was re-opened to the public for community use. Since then, it has housed many events and meetings and has become once again a focal point in the community.

