

DISTRICT SCHOOL #4 – HAMLET OF EGYPT

The hamlet of Egypt was one of Perinton's first settled areas. Drawn by the fertile land and abundant water supply, Thomas Ramsdell and Oliver Loud, among others, purchased land and began farming the area early in the 1800's. As an early Perinton population center, Egypt had mills, inns, stores, a post office, a church, and, of course, a school.

The first Egypt school was established in 1826 in a small wooden building near the present site of the Town Centre Plaza. The school served 67 students in 1827, 56 children from 21 families in 1832, and 74 scholars in 1844. Clearly, Egypt was a thriving community. Sometime before 1848, the school location was moved to the south side of Pittsford-Palmyra Road near the corner of Loud Road. It is not clear whether a new school building was constructed or the old one was moved to the new location. A note in the records indicates that since the unruly canal boat people attended school in the winter, a male teacher had to be hired.

By the 1850's, #4 school had moved to the north side of Pittsford-Palmyra Road opposite Victor-Egypt Road. The first building on the site was a wooden structure. It was replaced in the first decade of the 20th Century by a one and one-half story concrete block building. Cast-block concrete was a relatively inexpensive, durable, and popular mass-produced building material at the time. The 1908 Sears Catalog, in fact, devoted eight pages to concrete block-making machines. The School Commissioner's Report from 1906 commends the good condition of the school – the desks having been varnished and the boards painted. The school served 35 pupils, the teacher was paid \$36 per month, and there were 27 new and 60 old volumes in the library. The Commissioner stated that "Miss (Agnes) Dwyer is teaching in a good school." In 1907 a list of materials included Peerless maps of the world, Bridgman's School Map of the State (the "only state map approved for rural schools"), Bardeen's county maps, and W. & A.K. Johnston's globes.

As with district schools in general, #4 was the focal point of the community. The library was the community library, community meetings were held there, and, of course, the school itself was run by community members. Reminiscences of former students prove that the school was also where life-long friendships and local loyalties to town and community were formed. In 1936, a school reunion brought together a number of former students and teachers. Charles Butler and 10 of his pupils were there. Effie Herendeen, a teacher from the 1890's and 22 of her former pupils attended, as did Ella Blazey, another teacher from the 1890's. John Woolsey, who attended the school from 1896 to 1901, wrote how fortunate he felt to have attended the school and that "a country school embracing all grades is one of the basic institutions of America..." He spoke of several classmates and wondered if students "still drink out of the same dipper." Jenny Plumb, who had taught in Egypt in 1870, presented a poem remembering school times and classmates:

"...Take a long look backward,	Wouldn't it be joyous
Scan the register	To meet that long line
Read the list of those who	And with them recall the
Once were pupils here.	Days of Auld Lang Syne?..."

The era of the small district schools came to an end with centralization in the early 1950's. The schoolhouse itself was sold in 1955 to the Fairport Grange for use as their meeting hall. In 1993, it was designated as a Perinton landmark, and most recently has been beautifully restored as offices by its owner, attorney Thomas Klonick. The building continues to be an anchor point for the Egypt community.

