

EGYPT' S DISTRICT SCHOOL #4  
and GRANGE HALL

“Back to Egypt schoolhouse  
After many years  
Which is more befitting -  
Rejoicing or tears  
The old alma mater  
Does not look the same  
Changed to suit requirements  
Merits praise not blame....”  
-Jenny Plumb  
(teacher at District #4 School 1870)



The old schoolhouse at 7700 Pittsford-Palmyra Road clearly does not look the same, nor is it any longer a schoolhouse, but the changes do merit “praise not blame.” It has been lovingly and painstakingly restored to use as attorney Thomas Klonick’s office and is one of Perinton’s historic landmarks.

The present one and one-half story building was built in 1908-9 with the east wing added about 1931. It is a “vernacular” style structure rather than one of high style, which simply means that it reflects how ordinary people lived. The main walls of the structure are rock-faced concrete block. Spurred by the mass production of Portland cement early in the century, the use of ornamental, rock-faced, or cast block concrete was becoming popular as a practical, fireproof, and inexpensive building material. The 1908 Sears Catalog, in fact, devoted eight pages to concrete block-making machines. The gables are clad with wooden shingles; banks of four-over-four double hung windows are located on the south, east, and west elevations; and the front gable has a pair of round-arched windows. The building is entered by a pair of multi-paned doors and is crowned with a pyramidal roofed, square belfry. The original interior plan included a center hall, two large classrooms, and two bathrooms.

There were probably three other school buildings in Egypt before the present one was built. The first school was where Town Centre Plaza is now located, and was opened in the early 1800's; a second one, built in the 1820's, was located in the vicinity of Loud and Pittsford-Palmyra Roads. Student population in Egypt grew from 56 in 1832 to 74 in 1855. The first school on the present site, a wooden building, was built in 1858. As the population shifted toward Fairport village and the canal, however, attendance dropped to an average of 30 students by 1906. Nevertheless, residents proudly maintained their school, as evidenced in the school commissioner’s report of 1908 which says that “Desks were varnished this year, boards painted, the school building is in good condition, Miss Dwyer is teaching in a good school.” The report further mentions that the door of the boys’ water closet was off its hinge, that there was no flag, that the library had 27 new volumes and 80 old ones, and that Miss Dwyer’s salary was \$36.00 per month. From 1908 until it was sold due to school centralization 1955, District #4 school held classes in the current building which not only served as a meeting place and the local library, but also as the focus of community spirit.

Another focus of rural community activity, the Fairport Grange, took over the property in 1955. Grange organizations, begun in the 1880's, served to give farmers a unified voice against sometimes exploitive business interests. Progressive reforms in the areas of women’s suffrage, improved infrastructure and farming methods, and regulation of food handling were among their

concerns. The Fairport Grange, organized in 1883 with 12 members, had been meeting in rented rooms in the village for over 70 years. Schoolhouse #4 would be their first permanent home and one they would occupy for over 40 years.

The Grange hall, as the building is popularly known, is a significant structure for a number of reasons. Its exterior appearance is still that of a rural schoolhouse and it is one of only two independent Grange Halls still standing in the county. As such, it is a reminder of two aspects of Perinton's rural heritage. Its construction of ornamental concrete block places it in an exciting transitional period from traditional building practices to modern ones. This building, then, is both a symbol of our rural past and a vanguard of progress, and well deserves its designation as an historic landmark.