



SOUTH EVERGREEN SCHOOL, SUMMER 2021

# South Evergreen Schoolhouse 2021

8780 LEONARD RD, COOPERSVILLE, MI 49404

## Schoolhouse Renovation Continues

### 2021 Sees Renovation Resume and Big Projects Started

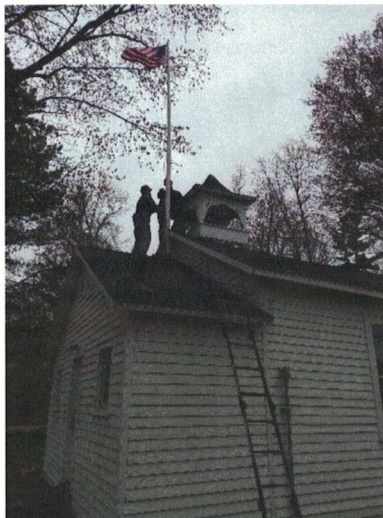
As this year draws to a close, we look back at another year of trying to get things back to normal. The schoolhouse committee has been anxiously awaiting the start of two important projects coming up at the end of the year, as contractors struggle to stay ahead of demand.

On the schedule for this winter are the total replacement of interior plumbing for the two bathrooms and main area sink. The committee is also excited about the upcoming excavation and installation of a new septic system. We hope to have both projects completed by the end of the year. We're keeping our fingers crossed!

**Thank you for your continued  
support of the South Evergreen  
School preservation project!**

### Flagpole Replaced

Last year's newsletter showed how committee member Jim Key created a new flagpole to replace the original that was destroyed by wind during a summer storm in 2019. The new flagpole was finished and installed in April 2021.



Jim Fitzpatrick and Dustin Kelly settle the new flagpole into place.

### Questers Offer Project Support

Questers is an organization whose mission is keeping history alive by supporting preservation, restoration, and education of historical buildings and sites. Local Questers President, Barbara Willis and members of the Campau Lyon Questers convened one of their membership meetings at the South Evergreen Schoolhouse in the spring of 2021.



The group has offered to support the school's renovation by funding the exterior reglazing and painting of the schoolhouse's east windows. This work was completed in October 2021. They also contributed antique desks. In the photo above, Jim Key speaks to the group about the history of the school and the preservation projects that have been completed since 2013, when the committee first began raising donations to purchase the schoolhouse as an historical site in Polkton Township. Thank you, Questers!



## Where are Your Donations Going?

Renovation of the schoolhouse has slowed a bit the last two years with the covid pandemic making it difficult to accomplish the necessary next stages. Contractors have struggled to keep up with supply and employee shortages while trying to maintain a high demand for their work.

These photos show the committee's work in preparing the two bathrooms for updated plumbing which can hopefully be installed in Winter 2021.



This photo shows the west bathroom floor stripped of its old floor covering.

This photo at the top of this page shows exposed plumbing for the sink at the front of the classroom.

The original classroom sink, made in 1922 and installed prior to the bathrooms' addition around 1946 will be restored to its location at the front of the classroom. It included a drinking fountain.

Below is a photo of the west bathroom's floor, ready for plumbing. A small space,



needing tricky plumbing expertise.



UA Local 174 Plumbers and Pipefitters Union has agreed to provide the plumbing labor for the two bathrooms and the classroom sink as a teaching opportunity for its apprentices.

We anticipate the plumbing work to begin before the end of 2021, paving the way for hookup to a new septic system (see last page) and a new well to be sunk sometime in 2022.

Once the plumbing work and hookup is complete, final restoration of the schoolhouse floors will be scheduled, hopefully in the spring of 2022.

So, even though we've wished for more progress over the last two years, things are still moving.

**It'll be exciting to see these final phases completed!**

### THANKS!

We need donations to keep up the work, but not all donations are in dollars.

Bob Lemieux and Doug Hehl both donated valuable lumber to replace the outhouse's rotted roof (see next page), helping save money for other uses.

**Thanks to Bob and Doug and to all donors and volunteers who have been so supportive over the years.**

**It's remarkable what schoolhouse donors and volunteers have helped accomplish since 2013!**

**Donate: GHACF, One South Harbor Drive, Grand Haven, MI 49417**

## Successful Summer Fundraiser



The Concerned Crockery Citizens

Thank you to the Concerned Crockery Citizens who organized a fundraiser for the South Evergreen Schoolhouse last summer. The event was held at the Veterans Park in Coopersville on September 18, 2021. Donated items were auctioned at the event.

Over the years the Concerned Crockery Citizens have held pancake breakfasts at the Crockery Township Hall that have raised money for the schoolhouse renovation effort.

**Thank you all!**



## A Story of Two Outhouses

It may seem a strange topic and these days there may even be those who don't know what an outhouse is. But we're guessing our donors remember.

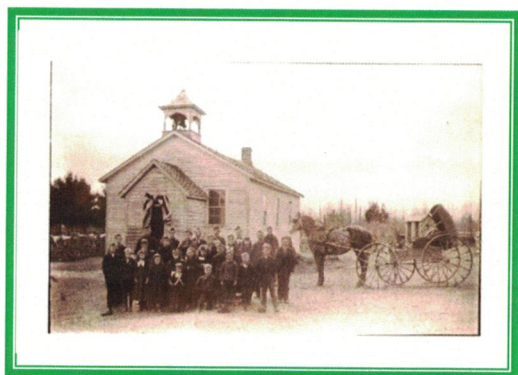


The above photo was taken around 1900. This was certainly a special occasion given how dressed up everyone is.

In the background to the left of the schoolhouse is a single-door outhouse. By a fortunate turn of events, that same outhouse sits on that very spot on the school property today.

In earlier editions of this newsletter, we explained that the schoolhouse committee was able to locate and return this outhouse to its place next to the school in 2017.

### Outhouse #2, Original Double-Door



A two-door outhouse that was original to the property is shown in the second photo. You can see this double-door outhouse situated at the right of the schoolhouse and behind the buggy. This photo captures another special occasion held at the schoolhouse around 1894. Teacher Ms. Golden's horse, Dick, also attended the event.

According to South Evergreen student, Doug Hehl, at some point around 1900, the two-door outhouse was replaced by two single-door outhouses. One was placed to the left of the schoolhouse (the one in the first photo) and the other on the right.

Around 1946, John Vargo (Louis Vargo's father) bought the two outhouses for \$5.00 each. They were retired when new, modern bathrooms were installed in the front addition. One outhouse was used as a milk house and the other continued to serve its usual purpose. Years later, Jack and Vicki Fisher bought that outhouse and used it as a garden shed for over 30 years. Over the years the other outhouse disappeared.

Assisted by a grant from the Coopersville Area Youth Advisory Committee, the schoolhouse renovation committee was able to trade the one-door outhouse for a replacement shed built by the Coopersville High School industrial technology wood shop students. The students also removed a window that had been added by the Fishers, returning it to its original style. The schoolhouse committee then repainted the outhouse its original white color.

## A New Outhouse Roof

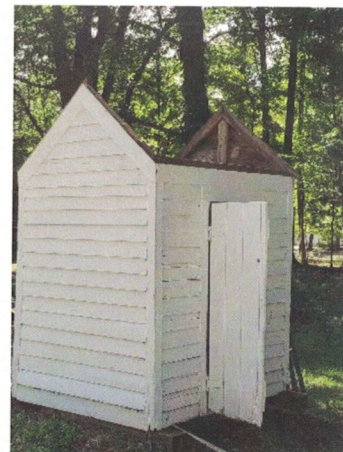
This summer, the schoolhouse committee replaced the old and damaged roof. Not only the shake shingles had to be replaced, but the entire roof had to be removed and rebuilt. In the photos below, Jim Key and Jim Fitzpatrick begin work.



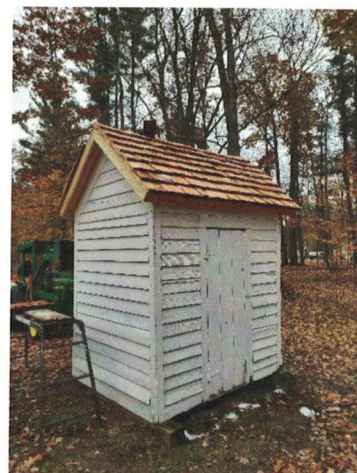
Stripping off rotten roof boards



The roofers found square nails in the roof



Roof removed



A new roof, hand made shake shingles



# School Gets a New Septic System

## Another Act of Generosity Comes from Local Excavator

Since the schoolhouse restoration committee first began gathering donations to fund the purchase of the schoolhouse back in the fall of 2013, there have been many acts of generosity by donors who have seen the schoolhouse preservation as something important for the community. Many, many people have come forward to offer dollars or gifts of their labor or expertise.

When Mark Kuperus, of Kuperus Excavating, heard that a new septic system for the schoolhouse was necessary, he offered to do the work and donate the cost of its excavation and installation.

Pending permits (soon!?! ) Mark will excavate the old, obsolete septic system and install a new one.



These two photos show the old 1946 septic system that was dug up pending installation of the new septic system.



The old system was made of concrete blocks with multiple lids that had horseshoes for handles. These can more easily be seen in the next photo.



The new system will consist of two tanks and will be positioned on the west side of the school building.

We are extremely grateful to Mark for his generosity in donating the septic system to the schoolhouse. His donation will go a long way in helping us complete the school's restoration since we will be able to use accumulated donations for interior work, such as refinishing the floors (hopefully in the Spring of 2022).

Look for photos on our website of the excavation and installation of the new septic system soon – hopefully the first of the year!

## A Short History of the Founding of South Evergreen School

9/30/1942 Edition of the Coopersville Observer:

"Jacob Potts, Samuel Smith, Nelson Chase Severance and Derial Rice were the promoters and instigators of forming the South Evergreen School located on the River Road in Ottawa County about three miles west of Eastmanville, Ottawa County, Michigan. Fannie Wilson was the first teacher in this school."

Davis Derial Rice, one of these promoters, died in 1868. From this date, we know the idea of the school came before this. It has been suggested that 1867 was the year the schoolhouse was first constructed on the same location where it still stands today. Its original construction was about two-thirds its current size. There were two additions over the years – one at the rear added more room and another in 1946 added two modern bathrooms.

Nelson Chase Severance, another of the founders, had a daughter named Sarah who married James A. Wilson, a brother to Fannie Wilson, the first teacher at South Evergreen. It was James who initiated Fannie's hiring. Information about Fannie Wilson's birth and marriage dates has helped estimate the date the schoolhouse first came into use to be right after the Civil War, around 1867.



This late 1800s plat map shows the Potts, Rice, Severance and Smith families owning property near the school (the yellow circle).

The Rice family purchased their land to the south of the schoolhouse in 1855 after they immigrated from Canada. Their home was a log cabin in the middle of a hickory grove planted by native people who would camp on the island in the river and visit from time to time.

The land the founders owned along the river was situated around the southern terminus of what is now 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue and along Oriole Drive.

Thanks to all donors for your generosity – it's because of you that we've been able to do so much!

The South Evergreen Schoolhouse  
Committee of Polkton Twp  
[www.southevergreenschool.com](http://www.southevergreenschool.com)

Donate: Grand Haven Area  
Community Foundation, One South  
Harbor Drive, Grand Haven, MI 49417

Write "South Evergreen School" on the  
note section of your check

Contact the Committee:  
[info@southevergreenschool.com](mailto:info@southevergreenschool.com)

Committee Members: Jim Key, Jim Fitzpatrick,  
Kathy Walt, Jan Kimble, Leah Spinner