

Michipicoten's Little Red School Houses

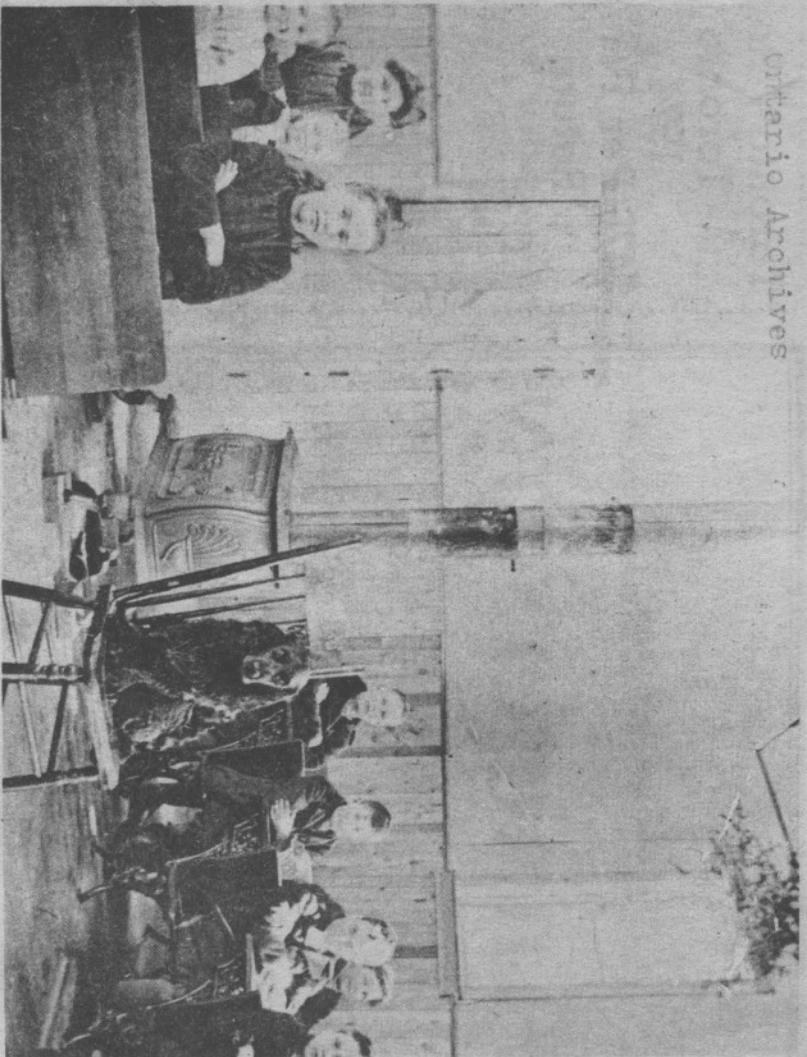
By D. E. Pugh

Michipicoten District has many picturesque one room, red frame school houses with wood burning stoves, and the A.B.C.'s of the alphabet staring down from over vast stretches of slate blackboards. From the early 1900's, small schools welcomed less than enthusiastic students at Michipicoten Harbour and the Mission. The Harbour school may still be seen in Wawa, and is used as a "cub" hall. The Helen Mine boasted of its own school building, while the Magpie Mine, operated from 1913 to 1921, had 80 children in school each year. During the profitable gold mining boom of the 1930's, most major gold mines maintained school buildings. An anachronistic red tapered school building with its large bell donging in the wind is a sober reminder of more prosperous times in Goudreau, while only foundations remain of the Cline Mine school house. Virtually no traces survive of the school building at the Parkhill Mine on the Surluga Road, three miles from Wawa, though this building also substituted for a church, and was used for public meetings. A school house has also disappeared from the little known Mammoth Metals galena mine, located at Helen Mountain on the west side of Wawa Lake, and from the Josephine Iron Mine six miles north of Hawk Junction.

Mrs. Coleman has recalled for student Jennifer Fletcher her days as a school teacher of 30 students at Michipicoten River in 1950, when the attached residence became so cold from the frigid Lake Superior breezes that water froze beside the cook stove. She also taught for one year in High Falls. The Mission school still surveys the village but with centralization the school is used not for classes but as a Masonic Temple.

Sir James Dunn Public School in Wawa was begun in 1949 to replace a 2 room school and annex containing 155 students. Under the "Board of Continuation School Trustees of Michipicoten Township High School Area", Grades IX, X and XI were taught by Mr. Stetler, Miss Tyrell and Miss MacNamara for 28 students in the Public School. Continuation classes were also held in the town hall by Mrs. Morphet and Mr. Korchuck as far as Grade XII. On October 1, 1954, students obtained three classrooms and an office at the present Michipicoten High School site, with room for 125 students. By 1956 a 73' x 46' gym - auditorium, four classes and a library had been added, for 125 students and a staff of seven. By 1961 enrollment had increased to 168.

In the autumn of 1972 the present high school addition was completed giving Wawa a modern high school system. With extension courses taught by Sault and Algoma Colleges, Wawa's graduates will continue to fill many important positions in today's world.



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