



Chesterfield Township Historical School

# The Journal

Chesterfield Historical Society



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## Historic Village Winter Walk

For a second year, the Chesterfield Historical Society will host a Winter Walk through the historic village. Local businesses and community members are asked to sponsor a pre-decorated lamppost. Sponsors may also bring decorations and create a “winter wonderland” ground display. The event will be open to the public from December 3 to January 31.

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### *Chesterfield Twp. Historical Society*

**President-**

Kathy Vosburg

**Secretary-**

Adam Mueller

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Linda Hartman

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**Newsletter Editor-**

Adam Mueller

## Exciting New Updates!

The Chesterfield Historical Society has a new website, updated with a new layout and a new website address. Check it out at: [www.chesterfieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.chesterfieldhistoricalsociety.org)

A new aluminum handicap ramp and composite wood deck replaced the old wood ramp and deck at the Weller Schoolhouse. The new deck extends further along the back of the schoolhouse.

## *In Memoriam*

Marlene Krul passed away on October 1, 2021 at the age of 78., wife of life member William Krul.

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Lucille Adcox passed away on November 4, 2021 at the age of 81. Both Lucille and husband Franklin are life members of the historical society.

# Vietnam Reenactment!

The Michigan Military Technical & Historical Society participated in a Vietnam reenactment at the historic village on August 14 and 15 with displays and battles. 193 guests attended.



# Heritage Days!

The Chesterfield Historical Society hosted Heritage Days on September 18. 137 guests attended and enjoyed crafts, games and activities.



# Remembering Salt River School Part 3



Salt River School was located in Section 14 of Chesterfield Township, north of 23 Mile Road and East of Salt River and was built around 1844. It was part of the Anchor Bay Rural Agricultural School District, which existed from May 19, 1948 to July 20, 1955. Afterward, it was absorbed into the Anchor Bay School System.

On the preceding pages, Warren Parker shares his memories of teaching at the Salt River School in 1848-1849. This was originally printed in the *Mount Clemens Monitor* in 1885.

## **An Old School District in Chesterfield—Supervisor Warren Parker Contributes Some Interesting Reminiscences**

EDITOR MONITOR—SIR: -- I have read with pleasure the recent communications in THE MONITOR on teaching school in Macomb County forty years ago. It brought vividly to my recollection the incidents that attending my first efforts in school teaching, which occurred in the Salt River district, during the winter term of 1848-49. It is known as district No. 4 of the township of Chesterfield. The district at that time contained one hundred and seven children of school age. Of this number about twenty-five attended school that winter. Mr. T. Little was director, and he engaged my services for the term of three months, at thirteen dollars per month, commencing on the first Monday in December. On that morning I started for my school, walking logs and through woods to my destination. Memory carries me back thirty-six years, and I meet for the first time the scholars to be under my charge and see them as they sit on those hard benches in that log school house. "Vester" and those two "bright boys" are there. The fire places have been replaced with a large box stove, the only change made. The usual routine for the day is passed and I hear the responses to rollcall. Their names were Jane E. Sylvester, Caroline, Harriet Ann, Chester, and David W. Little; John, Edward, Alfred,

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Amanda, and Levi Burgess; Roswell, Daniel A., Eli, Martin V., and Almira Green; Isaac and Gregoire Belanger; Marie and Freddy Rivard; Polly Woolman, Magloire Rivard, Joseph and Peter (twins) Rivard, and Wm, D. Meldrum. Were that roll called today, I would have no response from the following, they have answered the call of their Creator: Caroline Little, wife of Chas. Lamphere, Harriet Ann Little, wife of John T. Thompson. Almira Green, wife of William Howe, John, Amanda, and Levi Burgess, and one of the Rivard twin brothers.

Leon C. Rivard still bought staves, and among those who sold staves there was a man by the name of Harrison. His wife, a colored woman, used to do some of the teaming. One day while passing the school house with a load, some of the boys who were out at recess threw snow balls at her. She dismounted and with gad in hand followed them into the school house and in a lady-like manner, but with firmness in which the gad lent aid, requested that she should not be molested. It is needless to say that she received the assurance. Harrison was a fugitive slave from Missouri, who lived on and owned the eighty acres now possessed by Frederick C. Wuestenberg. Information was brought him that the owners of his person were on his track. He hid for a short time, sold his farm, and fled to Canada. According to report there was something mysterious in this transaction.

The matrimonial events were the marriages of John Milton and Loretta Burgess, Theodore Little and Esther Green.

Mrs. Beianger, mother of those "bright boys," died at this time.

I boarded around and remember well the families of the Burgessess, Wm. T. Little, Daniel Green, Isaac Beianger, Abram Rivard, Michael Rivard, and David Meldrum Sr. I much enjoyed their society, as well as that of the scholars, who were pleased to have the teacher go home with them, and I gained many items of interest from these early pioneers.

The Rivards settled in Salt River in 1824, David Meldrum in 1825, Wm. T. Little a year or two later, German Burgess in 1830, and J. D. Burgess in 1842. W. Meldrum's father was George Meldrum, of the firm of Meldrum & Parke, who were businessmen of Detroit nearly one hundred years ago. Of this number now known to be living are Wm. and Mrs. Michael Rivard, Isaac Belanger, Mrs. David Green, Mrs. J. D. Burgess, and Mrs. Abram Rivard. "Aunt Victoria" died several years ago. A few years after the death of Mr. Burgess, she married again. Her maiden name was Victoire Jollett, and in her girlhood she was educated in the Catholic faith. She renounced that faith and became a protestant.

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Near the close of her life, when death was near, those lasting impressions received in her childhood, that sank so deeply in her heart, proved too strong for her later profession, and she died in the full faith of her first love.

School teaching in the earlier days of Macomb county, was in some respects different from that pursued at the present time. The range of study not as wide, the system of imparting instruction not concentrated. Aside from reading and spelling, each scholar recited alone in most instances. The scarcity of books in use prevented a proper classification. Those books were in many cases the ones the parents had in their school days, which contributed in a degree to the variety.

The reminiscences connected with the early settlement on Salt River form an interesting chapter in the history of Chesterfield. Salt River takes its name from its salt spring, which was once considered of much value, and for which the government made a reservation. Mr. Meldrum's father manufactured salt there, and laid claim to the land. He employed as an assistant Joseph Socier, father of Mrs. David Meldrum. What a mine of wealth may still be in that spring! It was on this stream and the Lake shore that the first settlements in Chesterfield were made. Here Fabian Robertjean made the first entry of government land in the township, in 1820. The private claims of Meldrum & Parke, No. 192 and 193, stretching from Salt River to the River Vase, containing twelve hundred and eighty acres, were occupied and worked prior to July 1796. Also private claim No. 342, on the east bank of the river, for which Mr. David Meldrum has the original patent, granted in 1812, with the signature of James Madison attached thereto.

Within a bend, and a few rods back of the river, opposite the residence of David W. Little, stood the remains of an Indian fort. It occupied a space about twelve rods square, and at that date, 1848, the line of the walls were plainly to be seen, Wm. T. Little related that when he came in possession the remains were eight feet high and large trees were growing within. Fields of corn had been planted near. Dennis Burgess, uncle to "Big Dennis," related that when he and his brother, German, cleared their land nearby, the row where corn had been planted could be distinctly traced. In explanation, he said the Indians planted in the same hills for years in succession.

On a high bank of the river on the farm of Cornelius Burgess, amid growing bushes, a few tombstones, small and decaying, mark the graves of some of the early dead of those pioneer days. Strange emotions fill the mind as we think of these neglected spots,

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where once tears of sorrow were shed, where souls were wrung with agony, where the deep, surrounding forest lent additional fear and superstitious awe and dread. At another spot of the river, on the farm of Joseph Fuller, opposite his house, are several graves, some of which, and perhaps all, are enclosed with picket fences. Among them is that of "Pat" known to the early settlers here. He lived with Mr. Lewis, a former occupant of the farm. "Pat" was an Irishman, an old man, and had forgotten his name and age. He had been a soldier, and served in the wars of Napoleon. I saw him once at the home of Mr. Lewis. "Pat" died several years before I taught school in that neighborhood, and lies buried on the bank of Salt River, unknown save by the name of "Pat."

In conclusion I wish to say another word for the Salt River school. In the days mentioned it was common for new beginners to make their first effort at teaching in this school, but today such need be exceedingly well posted and able withal to cope with the school at Salt River.

Warren Parker

Milton, March 23d

(originally printed in the *Mt. Clemens Monitor* March 27, 1885 p. 4)

### Contact us

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## 2022 Calendar of Events

Sat. June 4, 10-4; Sun. June 5, 10-3 pm. **Ste. Claire Voyageurs & History Alive**

Sat. June 26, 1-4 pm **Michigan Log Cabin Day**

Sat. July 23, 10-4 pm; Sun. July 24, 10-3 pm **World War II Reenactment**

Sat. August 13 10-4 pm; Sun. August 14, 10-3 pm **Vietnam Reenactment**

Sat. September 17, 10-4 pm **Heritage Day**