

Union Grove School
Built 1901
One Room Schoolhouse Replaced
Wilson Academy of 1874

Union Grove School



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The Union Grove School provides an opportunity for visitors to experience the accommodations of a one room school house typically found in rural America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through the support of the Allegany County Historical Society and the Maryland Historical Trust, the one room school has been restored in its original setting.

Allegany County hosted a number of one room schools in the 19th century. In 1881, local historian Thomas Scharf identified 81 Allegany County Public Schools, and only 19 of those had more than one room. The average salary for teachers was \$36.50 per month.

In the early 20th century, the county operated more than 100 schools that were located within several miles of the pupils' residences. As bus transportation became available to rural students, the number of schools steadily dwindled as districts consolidated. The abandoned schools were

sold and often converted to other purposes; many were demolished. The Union Grove School is the only county school from the early 1900s to have survived in its original form.

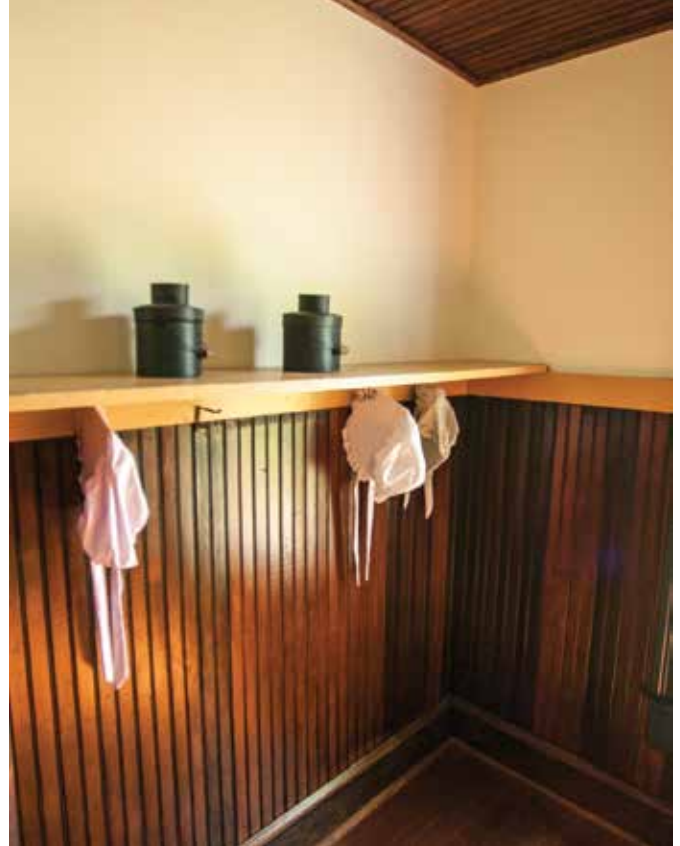
Union Grove School, located on Mason Road near Cumberland, Maryland, was built in 1901 to replace the Wilson Academy, an older facility located nearby. Grades one through eight were taught to students who resided within a mile and a half radius from the school. Like most rural schools, Union Grove became a center of social activities for the community. Fairs, evening programs, and other special events were held in the facility.

When Union Grove closed in 1926, students attended classes within the city of Cumberland. In 1928, the school building was sold by the Allegany County Board of Education to the Union Grove Community Club for \$250 and was later deeded to the Union Grove 4-H Boys Club.



In 1977, the building underwent a renovation sponsored by the Preservation Society of Allegany County. The school underwent a second and comprehensive restoration in 2010 with grant funds from the Maryland Historical Trust and matching funds and sponsorship from the Allegany County Historical Society.

Today, the Allegany County Historical Society offers field trips, tours, and a fall festival at the school. According to Amber Butcher, Director of Education for the Gordon-Roberts House of the Allegany County Historical Society, local elementary students have participated in “A Day In A One Room School” program, where reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught in a setting and teaching style from 1901. Gathering wood for the pot belly stove, writing on a chalkboard, and dipping quill pens into ink wells made the lessons authentic to the time period. The two and a half hour long program also included games from the time period and refreshments from a tin pail. Visitors



were welcome to view the McGuffey Primers that were widely used as materials of instruction in the early schools.

Adjacent to Union Grove is the swimming hole that was a popular hangout for children of the area.

The school is open periodically throughout the year for groups and individuals. To arrange for tours or educational programming, see Gordon-robertshouse.com or phone 301-777-8678.

Photos at left: “A Day In A One Room School” — students dressed in period clothing enjoy the teaching style from the early 1900s, especially writing with a quill pen and ink. Both photos courtesy Amber Butcher, Gordon-Roberts House.

Photo above: The cloak room with lunch pails.

Photo below: Teacher’s desk and interior of Union Grove Schoolhouse.

