

# A Look Back to the Old Schools in Allegany County, *Then and Now*

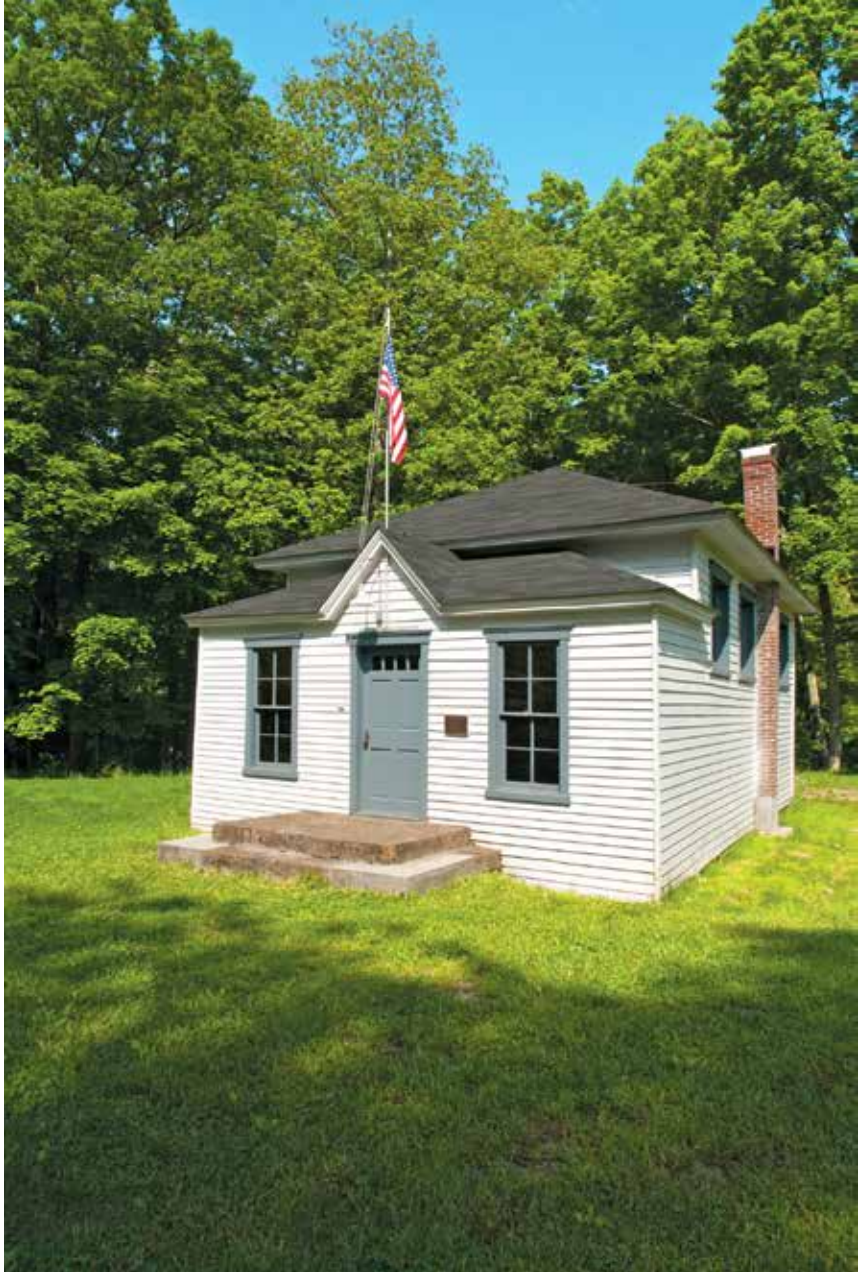
Written by: **Dan Whetzel** and **Jason Huber**

*SCHOOL DAYS, SCHOOL DAYS, DEAR OLD GOLDEN RULE DAYS  
READING, 'RITING, AND 'RITHMETIC  
TAUGHT AT THE TUNE OF A HICKR'Y STICK*



With the “Old Allegany” High School recently razed, it makes us wonder how many other old schools were there in Allegany County, Maryland? When were they open? When and why did they close? Are any of them still standing?

According to our research, between 1904-1905 there were 112 schools operating in Allegany County. We believe that to be the most public schools operating in the county at one time. Some of their whereabouts may be lost to history, but many still can be found if one knows where to look.



The Union Grove one room schoolhouse on Mason Road in Cumberland, Maryland, was built in 1901 to replace Wilson Academy of 1874. It is owned by the Allegany County Historical Society, has been fully restored and is open for tours at various times. *PHOTOS BY LANCE C. BELL*

## Identifying Old Schools

Most of the old schools standing today were built from brick or clapboard. The schools constructed from brick are easier to identify than the ones built from clapboard or other materials. The brick schools were typically built more recently in areas which had larger populations, and look like a school one would visualize when told to picture a school house. Several of the old brick schools in Allegany County have been repurposed for apartment buildings and other uses. Even after the transformations, it is generally easy to determine their original purpose.

The schools built from clapboard can be more difficult to identify; however, there were 3-4 popular architectural designs that most of the schools share. So, once one gets an idea of what to look for, it becomes easier to find them. Many of the schools have been repurposed into private residences and display additions that can make it a bit more difficult to identify, but usually a friendly neighbor can confirm the building was originally a school.

Another way to determine the locations of schools is by researching maps. Cartographers generally note schools because of their size and importance to communities. The oldest school we identified was found on a map dated 1842. Although the school name was not recorded, it was clearly marked along the National Highway between Eckhart and Frostburg.

No matter the construction materials or architectural designs, Allegany County's early school buildings shared one unfortunate characteristic—they were in poor physical condition. The extent of the problem was summarized in a report to the state superintendent of schools. "Nothing short of burning up some of our school houses could possibly warm them throughout some portions of the winter."

Increased funding over the decades remedied the dangerous conditions.

## Brick Schools Still Standing

Many of the old schools built with brick are still standing and have found new purposes. These buildings can be found in our small towns and cities.

### *Western Part of the County*

The McCoolle School is currently used for self storage. The former Bruce high school is currently home to Westernport Elementary. The last Barton Elementary School serves as a church. The Hill Street School in Frostburg served as the



**Top: The town of Luke's offices are now housed in the old Luke school.**

**Bottom: The McCoolle School is currently used for self storage.**

Frostburg Museum until the museum moved into the former Saint Michael's School on Main Street. The town of Luke's offices are housed in the old Luke school. The Pullen School in Frostburg hosts offices for Frostburg State University's Admissions, Financial Aid, Disabled Student Services, and Residence Life departments amongst others. The last and repurposed Lincoln school is also a part of Frostburg State University.

### *Central Part of the County*

The Columbia Street and Mount Royal Schools in Cumberland have been transformed into apartment buildings. Gephart School is now a church building. The Allegany Academy building became the Washington Street branch of the Allegany County Library system. Allegany County High School on Cumberland Street, the first modern high school in the county, is home to the Human Resources Development Commission (HRDC) Head Start program in Cumberland.



The last Ellerslie School contains storage items. Johnson Heights in Cumberland is now part of the hospital system. The Carver School, named after George Washington Carver, is home to the Carver Community Center in Cumberland. Although not thought of as traditional school buildings, both Ebenezer Baptist and AME churches hosted public school classes during the segregation era. The former Baptist church is now a private residence while the AME church continues to serve as a house of worship.

***Eastern Part of the County***

Piney Plains School became part of the Little Orleans Volunteer Fire Department complex. Schoolhouse Kitchen is now a restaurant in the former Oldtown School.



**Brick Schools No Longer Standing**

A number of brick school buildings have been razed. In many cases another structure has been built in place of the school, in other cases there is an empty lot with little clue that a school ever stood in that place.

***Western Part of the County***

An apartment building now stands where the Hammond Street School once stood in Westernport. The first Beall School stood where the current Beall Elementary stands. The second Beall (junior/senior high) sat on the property where Mountain Ridge High now serves students. A park has been constructed where the old brick Barton school once stood. The Midland school was recently razed. Central in Lonaconing was also razed and a community park is now in its place, while the nearby Jackson Street School was demolished.



***North Central Part of the County***

The early Mount Savage School has been razed and is now an empty lot.

***Central Part of the County***

Just as “Old Allegany” was razed to make way for new housing, so was East Side. The last lower LaVale School was also demolished and now has houses where it once stood. The site of Maryland Avenue School is an empty lot, while Centre Street School now has a park in its place.



The Virginia Avenue School stood near the present HRDC building in South Cumberland, and Pennsylvania Avenue’s location now hosts apartment buildings. Greene Street School stood where the Coca-Cola building now operates in Cumberland. A parking garage stands in place of the Union Street School, which also served as the central office of the Allegany County Board of Education from approximately 1901-1922.

**These four brick schools are no longer standing (top to bottom) – Midland School, Mount Savage School, Maryland Avenue School, and Centre Street School.**

## Clapboard Schools

Many of the smaller communities and mining camps had smaller school buildings constructed of clapboard or batten board, while the majority of antebellum schools were built of logs. Surprisingly, many of the clapboard structures are still standing and in use today. Many have been converted to private residences, while others have undergone remodeling thereby making it a bit challenging to recognize them.

### Clapboard Schools Still Standing

#### *Western Part of the County*

Charlestown, Detmold, and Rockville in the Lonaconing area and Borden Mines, Bowery Street, and Porter in the Frostburg/Eckhart areas are private residences. Moscow is a private residence and Pekin looks like it may be used for private storage. The Dayton School, outside of McCoolle, still stands and looks to be unoccupied. Grahamtown, one of the most impressive older schools, serves as a church.

#### *North Central Part of the County*

Dutch Hollow in Mount Savage is a private residence.

#### *Central Part of the County*

Lena Street, believed to be one of the oldest school buildings in the county, is now an apartment complex. Union Grove is owned by the Allegany County Historical Society and is open for tours at various times. Wilson, Corriganville, and Lindnerville serve as private residences.

#### *Eastern Part of the County*

Slider is privately owned and used for storage. Twin Oaks, also known as Double Pines and Imes (Iames), is privately owned and used as a hunting cabin.

### Clapboard Schools No Longer Standing

#### *Eastern Part of the County*

Brickhouse, Crock, Dailey, Deffenbaugh, Sulphur Springs, Green Ridge Station, Lower Green Ridge, Mertens, Roby, Twiggstown, Upper Green Ridge, and Warrior Mountain are no longer standing.

#### *Central Part of the County*

Early LaVale schools stood on the site near present day Fratelli's restaurant, near the Five Mile House on National Highway (Everstine), in Boetcherville (Butcherville) near Old Cash Valley Road, and on Winchester Road near Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant (Winchester Bridge). Paper Mill (Locust Grove), the last one room school to operate in the county, was demolished as was Barrelville's two primary school buildings.



**Top to bottom: Dutch Hollow School in Mount Savage is now a private residence. Slider School is privately owned and used for storage. Winchester Bridge School and Barrelville School are both no longer standing.**



**Pleasant View School was located in District Number 1, an area encompassing Little Orleans. Twenty-one students were enrolled at the school in 1903.**

The Fair Ground School, located in South Cumberland, was razed to make way for Chapel Hill on Virginia Avenue, just as Chapel Hill was demolished to make way for the brick Virginia Avenue facility. Mary Hoyer School on Independence Street in Cumberland became a YMCA

facility for black residents prior to demolition.

**North Central Part of the County**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ellerslie School has been demolished.

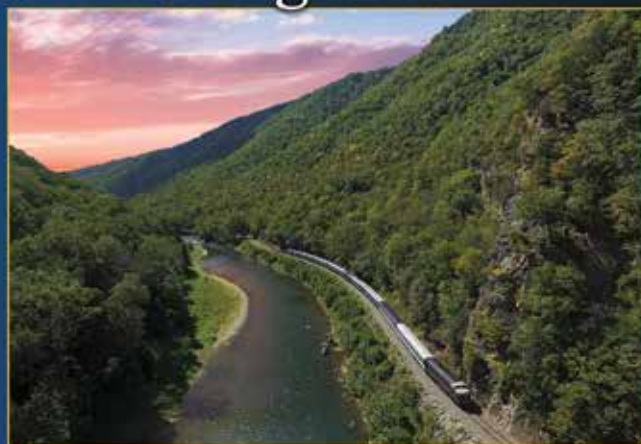
**Western Part of the County**

The original Lincoln schools on Oak Street and later Park Street in Frostburg were demolished. Lord (Klondike) was razed and is now the location of a dwelling. Lonaconing’s school for African Americans was demolished and is now a vacant lot. Beechwood in Lonaconing fell into disrepair and was razed, while only a foundation remains for Dye school near Dan’s Mountain State Park.

The authors are still working to identify and map the schools of Allegany County. If you have any information, pictures, or anything else to share on the schools mentioned in this article or any schools not mentioned please feel free to contact the authors at: [alleganycountyoldschoolproject@gmail.com](mailto:alleganycountyoldschoolproject@gmail.com).



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