

True Education (at Verona School)

A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

I'm surrounded by understated prairie beauty. Turtle Mountain to the east. Souris River to the west. Village of Waskada nearby. Quiet and Contented. But in earlier times? I literally vibrated with children laughing and singing. My floors bounced with steppings of evening dances lasting till dawn!

I'm Verona School, established 135 years ago, in 1885. It was an exciting day when the first teacher and her students walked through my door!



Busy? I'll say! Those first decades I was as much community hall as school - used for concerts, wedding showers.... And Sunday morning services! I listened to passionate sermons and songs of praise that reached up through my rafters!

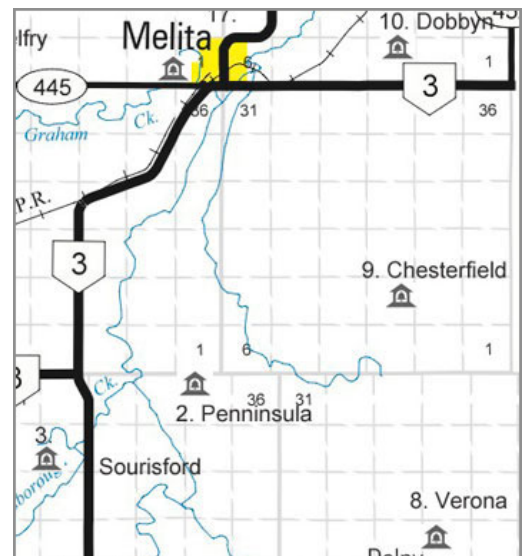
In 1897 my people lifted me onto skids and dragged me to a new site – not far, but more central to where children lived. And in 1918 I was given a new building! – complete with basement, coal room, cistern and indoor toilet!

My favorite events by far were Christmas concerts! They'd go all out with decorations, music and dramas in the telling of the Bible story! What a celebration! One year, in the early 30's they pulled out the stops and invited folks with instruments to form an orchestra! The talent! Violins, guitars, an organ and even a banjo! It was wonderful!

My Hey Day lasted 73 years. It was a good run. But winds change direction. And so do people's needs. Farm families were having fewer children. Teachers were getting harder to find. After WW II it seems humans were all about "bigger is better" - so science labs, special

music rooms, gymnasiums and shop classes seemed important.

As a small one-roomed school, I couldn't fit it all. And the teachers, skilled at getting all 8 grades to do their three R's all at the same time, couldn't possibly teach the specialized subjects as well. So, in 1958 my doors were officially closed and my children went to Waskada.



It was a sad day. I went from being the centre of this community to being an historic cairn. I'll live on for sure, as long as the youngest of my students lives on this earth. Because, what I gave to my children was a place to belong, to know their neighbours, celebrate harvest, weddings, the birth of a new baby - and the opportunity to stand on stage during the Christmas concert and be the center of their world's attention. The memories are rich. And, that, my friend, is education.

The day in August of 1982 when the cairn was erected - brought so many of my people. I heard stories from back in the day and some of grandparents even further back. And the laughing! It almost made me cry. Community! There's nothing like it!

Betty Sawatzky and David Neufeld adapted 'True Education' from a story written for Vantage Points 1.