

In the Beginning: The School Districts

Written by Betty Meyer

Did you know that Superior Township has counted one hundred and eighty-six (186) birthdays and is still counting!

History tells us that the township of Superior was created in 1831 by an act of the Legislative Council of Washtenaw County. The township was carved out of a larger township called Panama that also included Salem Township. History says that Henry Kimmel gave Superior Township its present name.

The land of what was to become Superior Township was by nature a beautiful area of rolling land laden with Indian trails. It was rich in good soil and wood lots with a number of small water ways were all within the 36 square miles of the Township.

The first purchaser of land within the Township boundaries was Robert Fleming. He bought land in Section 31 in 1823 from the U.S. Government. The President was John Q. Adams. The last government land was sold in 1847. The first house was build by Eldridge Gee in 1823 in Section 33.

The first schoolhouse was built in 1825 but it was not the last. Over time, ten schoolhouses were built, each representing its own school district. The size of a school district was established by land ownership and family size. As more people came to an area to build, they chose locations to balance the distance of how far you had to walk or ride a horse if one could have the luxury of a horse and buggy.

Below is a short description of the early school districts in Superior Township followed by a map of the districts.

School District #1- Superior Townline

This was a K-8 grade-school built in 1825 and rebuilt in 1886. It was located on .5 acres of land on the south side of Joy Rd. in Section 6. A few of the pioneer settlers included S. Mulholland, W.T. Manly, N. Stafford, Calvin Austin, Patrick Cowan.



Frains Lake School

School District #2- Frains Lake

The Frains Lake School for grades K-6 was first built in 1825 and rebuilt in 1872 on 1.6 acres in Section 9. This school also had to have a second building to house K-2 in Section 8. Both schools were located along Plymouth Rd. Early pioneers were A. Douglass, Joel Williams, Abraham McCormick, Esek Pray, J.W. Nanry, F.P. Galpin and Stephen Geer. The school and land are privately owned today.

School District #2 Fractional-

The Dixboro School was located in Section 7. It was the first school dating back to the purchase of a large tract of land by Captain Dix in 1826. He had the land platted into 64 lots of record with a reserve of 16 rods by 8 rods for a public square. The public square was the site for the school which still stands. In 1952 after a spirited discussion by Dixboro residents regarding land use, a 42 home development came to be. With the increase came the need for a larger school. The school was built on Dixboro Lane in between 1953 and 1958 on 40 acres having K-6 grades and was named Glenn Freeman School. Dixboro district annexed to Ann Arbor schools in Feb. of 1958.

Early pioneers were Herrand Alexander, William Wells, Thomas Isaac, John Dix and John Shaughniss.



Dixboro School

School District #3 Free Church

The Free Church School, K-8, was located on .5 acres in Section 13 on Gotfredson Rd.. The school was established between 1825 and 1826. Private homes were used until the school was built. There were few early settlers but they owned large tracts of land. Early maps (1850) show the school on Cassa Anna Rooke lands. This school land was annexed to Willow Run district in May 1957, with 66 children of school age. Early pioneers included C. Rooke, Abram Culver, J.L. Demike, E.M. Cole, John Brewer, T. Newton and J.S. McNim.

School District #3 Fractional - Fowler

The Fowler School, K-8, was located in Section 35. The school was annexed to the Willow Run School District in June 1957 with 23 children of school age. Early pioneers included E. P. Baker, O. H. Sober, J. A. McDougall, Joseph Peck and John Sanford.

School District # 4 - Crippen

Crippen School, K-8, was located in Section 16. The first school was located on Stommel Rd. in 1828 and was a small log building on an earth stone base. As the story goes the ground under the school was a very attract place for mother natures' black and white "kitty cats" (otherwise known as skunks.) Boys will be boys and they thought it would be "real fun" to try and chase the kitties out. To say the least it was not the teacher's idea of show and tell! The cure was to burn the old school down and build the new one at the end of Stommel Rd. on Cherry Hill Rd. The Ira and Henry Crippen families donated .5 acres of land for the new school. That school was burned down in 1980. (These facts come straight from three generations of families living during the time.)

Notes from the Crippen school district treasures book starting in the year 1910 shows L. B. Pettibone as treasurer and Wanda Hawes as Teacher. Teachers were paid \$32.00 per month and the cost to run the school for one year was \$471.47. The last year recorded in the book was 1935. Teacher Elizabeth Erskine was paid \$55.00 per month and the cost of running school \$822.90. In 1935 the treasurer was John Meyer. The school district of 42 families was annexed to Ypsilanti district in 1961. The cost of running your school district was a tax assessment to each land owner. All districts reporting budget needs to the Commissioner of Schools at the County Site. Yes times were hard and people had delinquent taxes way back then, and they could and did lose their land to taxes. Early pioneers included Ira and Henry Crippen, Sam Frains, H.S. Gale, S. Mulloland, J. Sweitzer, M. Pettibone and A. Wilbur.

School District #4 Fractional - Geer

Geer School, K-6, was built in 1880 on one acre of land in Section 2 on Gotfredson Rd. Geer school has been preserved and still stands on the site. Early pioneers included Jacob Patterson, Chase, William Geer, Augustus Root, Abraham McCormick, T. Quackenbush and Esek Pray.



Geer School

School District #6 Bennett

Bennett School, K-6, was built in 1913 on one acre of land located in section 28 at the northeast corner of Geddes and Leforge Rd. The school was annexed to Ypsilanti in 1961. The school and land reverted back to land owners at the time and was used for a short time used for a day school. It was later torn down. Early pioneers included James Vorhies, B.F.Bennett, J. Neweton, Ira Camp and Roy Bryant.

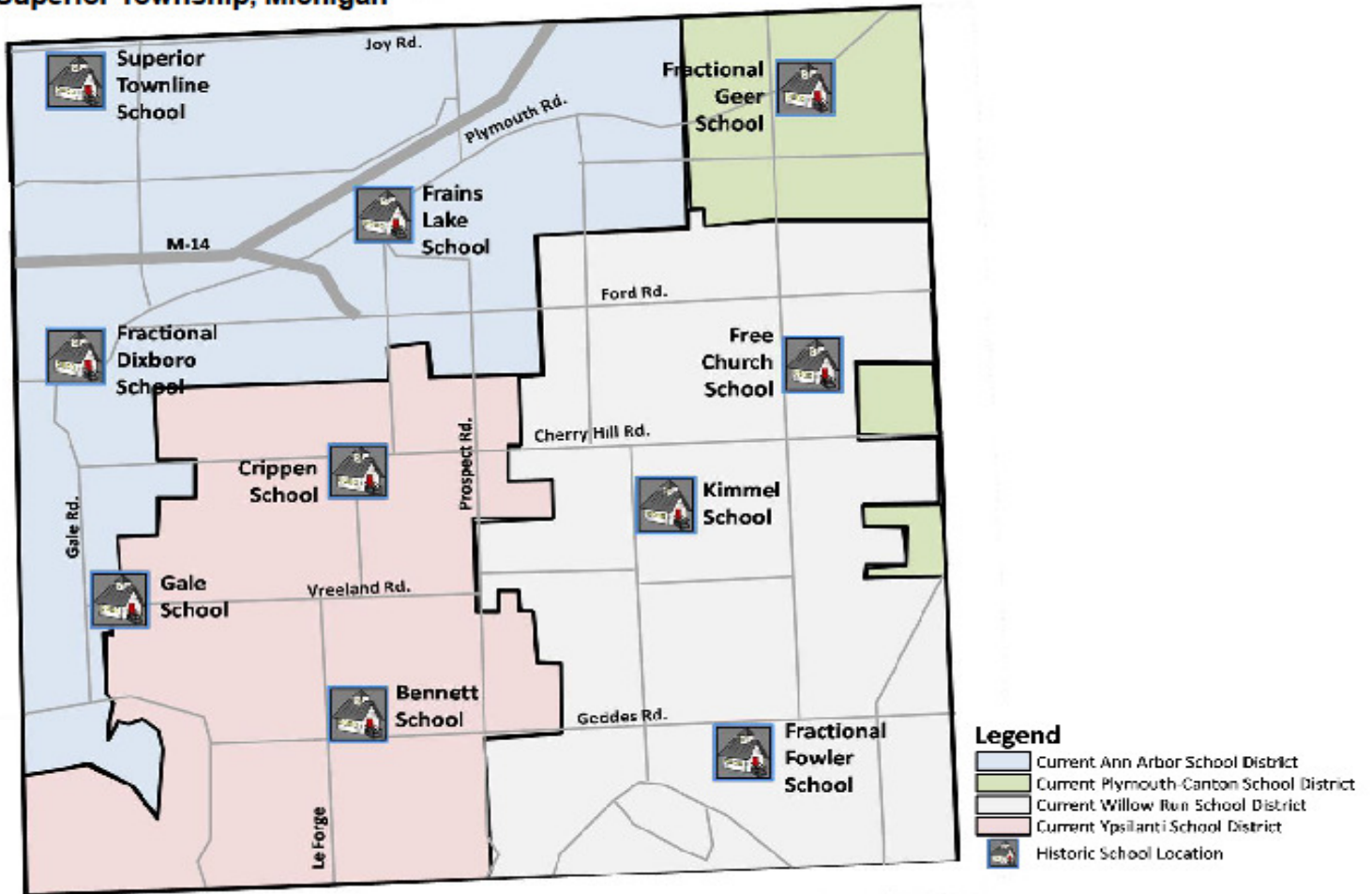
School District # 7 - Kimmel

Kimmel School, K-8, was built on Harris Rd. in Section 23. First built in 1856, it was rebuilt in 1930. Henry Kimmel (the gentleman of record to name Superior Township), signed a lease for one dollar and one hundred years for the school site to be used by the district families. The lease ran out in 1956 and the land had passed to Earl Knaggs and by will to daughter Ruth DeNoyer. The lease was renewed and when the district annexed to the Willow Run School District, the school went into a private home and still remains. Early pioneers included A. Kimmel., L.L. Kimmel, A. Clark, A. Hamilton Collins, and J.L. Strang.

School District #5 –Gale

Gale School, K-6, was built on .5 acres in Section 19 on Vreeland Rd. The first school was built in 1870 and remodeled into a two-room school in 1939. The school is now a private home. Early pioneers: Joseph Wyckoff, John Doyle, Peter Cowan, John Doyle, A. Porter and G.W. Gale.

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If you have enjoyed reading "In the Beginning: The School Districts" let the Township office hear from you. Hopefully we can bring more memories of the past in later issues.