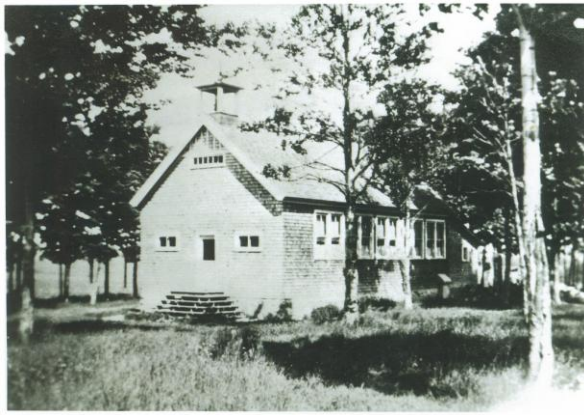


Houghton Canal School. Built in 1911-1912. Closed August 1942.
T56 R34W NW ¼ of SW1/4 of Section 33.
Across from the Olson farm on Canal Road.
Elementary children then bussed to Redridge School.



The Houghton Canal School was built during 1911-1912 when Gustaf Olson arrived in the Copper Country to establish a farm. A few years later his son Alex took over the farm and supplied materials for the school building.

In 1912 Earl B Holman came as Superintendent and the school held grades K -8th. The Olson gals, Betty and Eleanore, were both teachers in the school for several years.

After WW2, enrollment dwindled and the school board closed the school, bussing the students to Redridge School. The building was offered for sale on bids. Art Olson acquired the premise and tore it down for salvage.

School Board Minutes:

July 1941- Sect'y advised to order 6 Ton coal to Oskar, 15 T for Liminga. And write Matt Puuri about Canal School needing wood or coal.

August 1942.- Holman to investigate the possibility of getting a teacher for canal and if not successful to close same and come to Oskar.

September 3, 1942

- cut "juice" @ Onnela School. Close and board.

- cut "juice" @Canal and not board up if Alex Olson is responsible for its

well being.
- close Perala School and board up.

Dec. 23, 1943 – Obenhoff and Canal School meeting to decide if to be sold. Yes.

Put in newspaper.

January 17, 1944 – voted to dispose of Canal building and its heating plant by
advertising in papers 5 times. Decided not to dispose of Obenhoff at this time.

Feb 14, 1944.- Highest bidder was OA Olson on Canal School heating.



This picture was taken in 1955 by Bill Brinkman.

The 1910 census has Mary Koski 21, is teacher boarding with Gustov H. Olson.
(Probably the Canal School as it was on Olson property).

Richard Garnell's flyer on Oskar Canal states: the Houghton Canal School was built in 1911. It had up to 50 students. This school was across from the Olson farm now Jon Dunstan's. Richard shares that the lighthouse keeper's wife Mrs. Jones taught Kindergarten to 5th grades. Miss Marie Heikkila (later Mrs. Leonard Lahti) taught grade 6-8 in the 1920's.

Delores Trolin Little says her teacher at the Canal School in 1941 was Mrs. Beltarri.
Delores donated the school picture taken in 1938?

These are the student names identified by her, Robert Olson, and Marie (Romppainen) Tuohimaa:



Front to back, right to left.

Wilfred Ylitalo

Arbutus Nakkula - married Redridge Arnold Raisanen

Alice Lepisto - father was commercial fisherman. She married Bob Murto. They had property on Old Mill Hill. Going up hill it was the first farm on the left.

Delores Trolin - she married Charles Little (was Secretary for Barb and other staff in Extension Service).

Ruth Patana - she married Roman Koski

Barb Patana - she married Pete Ruohonen and is in Oskar.

next row to left:

Ruth Knuuttila - she became Mrs. Salo.

George Ylitalo - he died young.

Nancy Garnell - she married Orvil Korpela and lived in area. Deceased.

Elba Ylitalo - became Mrs. Martin McGrath.

Bob Olson - married Jean.

Katherine Kelly - moved to South America Bob Olson thinks. Marie confirms.

Eva Maki - married Paul Brinkman.

next row to left:

Billy Johnson

Paul Solmonson - moved to CA. Deceased.

Jerry Knuuttila - moved

Ray Knuuttila - lives in Dollar Bay

Paul Kangas Deceased.

Martha Ylitalo - married Hongisto. Deceased.

Teacher Eleanor Olson Hongisto (Bob Olson's sister)

Next row to left:

Hubert Peterson - married Stella and lived on N. Superior Rd.

Florence Garnell- See write up on Garnell

Edward Tapani - See write up on Tapani

Dolores Marshall.. Moved West. Married. See write up on Koski

Carl Tapani- See write up on Tapani.

Absent the day the picture taken were Florence Elaine (Romppainen) Suo on the left and Marie Alice (Romppainen) Tuohimaa on right.



Florence E. Romppainen Suo



Marie A. Romppainen Tuohimaa

Bob Olson says the school children played ball, "it", pie tag, skied, fight, hide in seek in our woods (school was on their property). (Marie adds games of Pump, pump pull away, anti anti over). We were in the one room school from K to 8th. Bill Ruohonen was our bus driver to Redridge for 8 -10th grade.(Marie adds 6th thru 10 grade bus driver) Then we went to Houghton for 11 and 12th.

Art Olson shares: I went to the Canal School from 1924 to 1933 or so. I was able to skip seventh grade as I heard so much of what was taught to 7th graders in that one room school building. Earl Holman would come and teach us sometimes. He said if we could pass the 7th grade exam in 6th grade then we could go to 8th. I was able to pass the test. But Roosevelt told those that did had to pass a civics test also. That test was to name all his cabinet members. We memorized them and passed that test also. This testing to higher grade could occur from 7 to 8 and from 8-9. Mr. Holman lived in Redridge across from the grocery store. Yes, I had my sister Eleanor for a teacher in 10th grade. My sister Mabel taught in the Heinola School but quit as kids were terrible.. jumped out of windows etc.

Richard Garnell shares with Barb: At recess we kids would play baseball, or can in the hole (with a stick try to get can into a hole, if done. winner. others are trying to get their can in hole and yours away from hole), climb trees in Alex Olson's woods (across the road), or ski to the canal. We got to school by walking or xc skis. We carried our lunch and satisfied with whatever sent. (Not a lot available).

Mike Lahti (Alex Lahti's son Leonard's son) tells of a schoolteacher Marie Heikkila at the Canal School.

Evelyn Olson Mikko shares this about school in her 1980 document.. Written when she was 67.. Still alive in April 2008):

Our Canal School must have been a chore for the teacher to teach grades 1-8 to speak English as everyone spoke Finnish at home. In the 1920's we had 2 teachers with 10 grades with about 40 students, but all in one room.

A large furnace type wood stove was in the back of the room.

"Blackboards" were across the front wall and one side of the room and back wall, but they were some type of green non-slate.

Under the back wallboard were hooks for coats and hats.

Two doors were on the back wall. One led to the non-flush lavatory for gals and the other door led to the boys. The boy's lavatory had a woodshed attached. We did not have toilet paper so used Sears or Montgomery catalogues. One or two fingers put up in air told the teacher what we had to do.

Our water for the day was brought in each morning and we had one dipper for all of us to use.

The front wall had two doors.. One on each side that led to the entrance hall which also had hooks for coats and hats. Also the rope that was pulled to ring the bell that was in a belfry on the roof. The bell was rung to let you know classes were to begin. It was also used for community emergencies.

After the school on Alex's property was closed busses took children to Redridge, but Alex bought the building. The bell was donated to a Japanese Lutheran Mission.

We gals played ball with the boys, as they did not have enough for a team. Our ball was a rolled up ball of string with tape covering it. Our bat was a tree branch. One day Mr. Holman came to our school and saw us playing ball. The next trip to our school he brought a real bat and ball.

In later years my sisters, Elizabeth Olson and Eleanore Olson, taught at the school.

My earliest recollection of school was in 1918 at age 5 during WW2. First thing in the morning we said the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, then 15 minutes of singing. Songs sung most were "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Tenting tonight" and "When Johnny comes Marching Home".

We always had Christmas programs at the school. The week before Christmas the older children would go to the woods and cut Cedar boughs and make wreathes for each window (about 10). Happy days when you were old enough to go; as it was all done during the school day. A large spruce tree was placed at the front of the room to one side. The tree was trimmed and real candles 3 inches long were used and lit. One adult man always sat near the tree all evening to watch the candles so they would not catch the tree on fire. Horrors if it ever had; as the tree blocked on of the two doors to get out. The room was filled to capacity as all the parents attended the program.

When we were in 7th and 8th grade (1924-1926 for her) we had to go to Redridge for two days each year to take the state exams. One of the questions was "What is Hollywood noted for?" We had never heard of Hollywood. Occasionally my aunt would give us some "True Story magazines" or "True Romance". Another question was "What is Battle Creek noted for?" - answer.. for the battle at Battle Creek. Somehow I did pass them. A lot of the children quit school when it came time to go for the exams.

Once and only once I played hooky from school. I told my mother I wasn't going to school. The one o'clock bell rang and mother said "I don't care but when pa comes home I'll tell

him". I beat it upstairs and stood behind the dresser from one until four. I never tried that again.

One time my brother Ernest and I went with a horse and sleigh to get my sister Elizabeth home on Friday night as she was going to high school (we'd stay in town from Monday to Friday when we were in high school). A big blizzard came and she had decided not to come but as we had already left my mother called someone on the way to tell us to turn back. Guess my mother and father worried if we would get back, as it was dark and the roads were getting blocked. The two of us got under a buffalo robe and sang; the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh, through the white and drifted snow. The horse stopped when we got into our yard and we got out from under the robe warm as toast.

A few years later when I was going to high school (1926?) I was walking home alone 5 miles in the dark in a blizzard. One stretch of road about one mile had no houses or lights excepting one vacant house supposedly haunted. I kept my head turned away from the house and just as I got near it I could hear the coyotes howling. I couldn't run as the wind was blowing and the snow was too deep. It seemed like 10 miles to me.

When school was out in June for vacation seems like our work just began.

Sometimes we would go with our skis to meet my sister Mabel coming home on her skis from teaching school. She was 17 years old and had graduated from high school and was waiting until her 18th birthday so she could enter the nursing school in Ann Arbor. The teacher from one of the country schools 6 miles away got sick and Mabel finished teaching the school year. Always remember her skiing through the woods. She wore khaki knee knickers, high top hiking boots, white wool sweater and a white matching cap singing a popular song of the day "Doodle Dee Doo.. Please play for me that sweet melody called Doodle Dee Doo..."

Researched by Barb Koski Osma Plat Road, Houghton MI 49931 2009.
Submitted 2011. Contact Webmaster with other information.