

MAY 3, 2016

The past month's activities have mostly surrounded the Hicks school move. As mentioned previously, the one room school in Pinckney was built in 1849 and was attended by students until 1972. The entire roof has been removed including the 22" wide quartersawn oak roof decking and hand hewn tamarack rafters. The roof members have been carefully labeled and will be resintalled when on site. An inspection of the sill beams from inside the crawlspace suggested that they were in good condition. However, removal of the bottom row of siding on the east side revealed a sill beam that had decayed on the outside face. The deterioration was mitigated at some point in the past with concrete. In order to move the school, the concrete has been removed and an epoxy filler has been employed to restore the beam. A section of beam was also removed along the front gable in the past and was likewise repaired with epoxy filler.

A report completed by two EMU historic preservation graduate students in 2006 suggested that two windows had been installed on the front gable end. They noted that the windows were quickly removed due to the distraction caused by trains traveling along the nearby railroad. There is no trace of the windows on this wall from the inside behind the slate blackboard. However, siding removed from the exterior clearly shows a difference in the type of lathe used for the repair compared to the original, revealing the location of the two windows. The original lathe appears to be thin boards that are split on the ends and then stretched to form gaps for the plaster. The repairs utilize standard size lathe strips (see attached photo). Also attached is an image of interesting "adjustment" by the carpenters. It appears that a couple of the wall studs were bowed. The carpenters simply cut a notch in the wood stud and inserted wood wedges.

The route to transport the school from Pinckney to Brighton has been approved by the county. The school will be escorted by sheriff's deputies to close roads as needed. The school will travel along a route south of Brighton along Silver Lake Rd and north on Kensington Rd. Depending on weather and other factors, we are hopeful that it will be moved in the next couple weeks.

The footings for the school have been poured at the farm and masons are currently laying the block foundation. The foundation will have a period correct field stone face. I was able to acquire some nice field stone from a farmer I know near Frankenmuth. As conversation turned to old houses and old contraptions, he showed me an interesting hand powered machine. Attached is an image of a Winner Tile Machine. From what I can gather, concrete tiles (actually concrete anything) were the rage during the early 1900s. The tile machine allowed the operator to create concrete drain tiles on site. Period advertisements boast that within making 100' of tile one could fully pay for the machine and reap the profits thereafter – I just wonder how long it would actually take to make 100' of tile...

I recently spoke with the owner of the school about conducting archaeological research at the site. He gladly permitted the research. We intend on focusing on the area of the old entranceway that has been covered by the front porch addition since 1947. We plan on displaying any recovered artifacts in the school.

Archaeological excavation has been ongoing in the garden area of the farm where the school is to be relocated. While artifact concentrations have been somewhat sparse relative to other areas of the site, we did make a number of important finds. One interesting find was an iron spike from a horse drawn harrow or drag. The spike looks somewhat like a railroad spike except it has no head. The spike-tooth harrows were used early on to pulverize the soil for planting. We also recovered sections of medicine bottles, window glass, square and round nails, animal bone, and ceramics. One sherd exhibits a maker's mark but is too blurry to make out. Several sherds of a blue floral pattern have been recovered and likely date to the 1880s or 1890s. I was also surprised to find a single rimsherd of blue Sydenham (dating to the early to mid 1850s) and a small section of redware (likely 1840s/1850s). Many thanks to current and former students of area universities that helped out on the dig.

While the masons worked on the foundation for the school, we spent time working on the interior of the Warner house. My wife, Kerry, was able to find a potbelly stove at a local garage sale. The stove is the Round Oak brand made in Dowagiac, MI. Family stories indicate that a large stove in the parlor was also a Round Oak. A brief internet search suggests it dates from 1898 to 1904.

A more important addition to the house is an original Bradley and Hubbard chandelier that hung in the kitchen. The glass shade has handpainted flowers and the oil/kerosene burner has been converted to electric. It was returned by my aunt, Lorrie VanDyke. I've determined that this particular item, probably more than any other, has in a way become a symbol of the Warner family. This might seem odd, but the chandelier was (and is) the most conspicuous 19th century artifact in the house. It literally was the initial focus of anyone's attention when opening the door to the Warner homestead. Having hung in the kitchen for decades, presumably from the 1890s, it was spared modern replacement updates like all of the other lighting fixtures in the house. It was rehung on the original cast iron hook this past weekend with hopes that it will light the kitchen for many decades to come. Many thanks to my aunt, Lorrie VanDyke.

The chandelier wasn't the only item to make its way back to the farm. My uncle, Chuck Warner, also donated more Warner farm items including two wood barrels and a wood level. The large wood barrel has red stenciling that appears to be "STOCK BRO...CONCENTRATED...?12 N MICHIGAN AVE CHICAGO ILL". I am having trouble finding more about the company on the internet. Any information on this would be appreciated. Many thanks to my uncle, Chuck Warner.

Last I want to thank the members of the Conference on Michigan Archaeology, an organization of professional archaeologists, who nominated Kerry and me to receive the Ira W. Butterfield award for outstanding contributions to MI archaeology. The announcement was made at the spring meeting of the Michigan Archaeological Society and the actual award will be presented at a future date. The recognition is certainly appreciated!