

Seven Suburban Teachers Hunt "Trilabites and Traffic Lights"

by Paul Lutzeler

This summer, 37 teachers attending the Northwest Metropolitan Area Community Resources Workshop at Livonia's Franklin High School completed intensive studies of their suburban communities. This is another in a series of feature story reports on the Workshop's findings.

Have you ever wondered which Indian tribes hunted on the suburban land on which you live? Were you ever curious to know who the pioneers were who first farmed the acreage which has since become your subdivision?

Seven suburban teachers who had been asked these and scores of other questions by the youngsters they teach developed the best part of their summer assignments as answers as possible.

Just published is a detailed workbook to be used as a guide for the study of suburban suburban social studies teachers. Called, "From Trilabites to Traffic Lights," the workbook is a compilation of the stories from the suburban Michigan and carries on through the Indian age, the European period, to the present day.

Researching the past were Livonia's Mrs. Doris Hardman, who teaches third grade at Stark School, Mrs. Patricia Keeler, who teaches fifth grade at the Section 17 school, Mrs. Virginia McGarr, who has a third grade class at Pearson, and Mrs. Ann Tenniswood, who is assigned to the third grade at Jefferson, who worked with fourth grade teachers Mrs. Ella Mae Ramsey, who handles the second grade at Farrand and Mrs. Elizabeth Sheldon, who teaches fourth graders at the Bird School, and Miss Patricia Wellard, who teaches third grade at Nankin Mill's Perrinville School.

According to Doris Hardman, who has been interested in the history of Plymouth and Livonia for many years, the principal aim of the unit was to "afford children and people new to our community the opportunity to broaden their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of our community, past, present, and future."

The detailed community study lists interesting resource people, field trips, materials which can be used to dramatize the study, and a list of the audio-visual aides available to teach elementary school children.

It is surprising few people who live in this northwestern suburban area knew that the Ottawas were the major Indian tribe in this area, Mrs. Sheldon said. "Others were the Chippewas, the Potawatomi, and the Wyandot or Hurons."

"Because of the hunting habits and wars the Indians were constantly moving. Thus it is difficult to assign a particular location to a single tribe. The first Indian inhabitants may have been here in 8000 B.C. However, it wasn't until the 1600s that the first white men arrived in the 1600's that any written records on the Indians can be found. Each tribe had an individual spoken language."

"In the early 1600's the southeastern section of Michigan, near Detroit, was the home of the Ottawas. Around 1650 the Ottawas migrated to escape the Iroquois. The Potawatomi lived in this area. In 1762, the Potawatomi village was located two miles below the present Ambassador Bridge. The Wyandots were located in Windsor and the Ottawas site was on the Canadian side opposite Belle Isle. The Potawatomi remained in this area until 1862, when they reached an agreement with the government and turned over their lands to the University of Michigan."

Pioneer schools were primitive and teacher wages were shocking compared to today's standards, according to Mrs. Ramsey. "In 1827 the territory passed a law making each township responsible for schools in its area," Mrs. Ramsey said. "Most townships had little money to spend on education for their children. However, the early settlers of our area, realizing the importance of education for their children, established schools by 1830, some public, others private select schools and academies."

"A typical school attended by twenty or thirty of the pioneer children was a one-room log cabin about eighteen feet by twenty feet in size. These log

schools were small and dark often without windows or sometimes with scraped deerkins used for windows. There were no desks. The logs kept out the cold of the winter snow and rain. The iron stove with its pipe gave the only heat.

"School furniture was crude. Long planks that served as a long desk were sometimes pegged into the side of the room. In front of these the students sat on a long bench facing the wall. Later desks and chairs were used. There were no chalk boards, bulletin boards or any of the modern necessities of classrooms. Each student had a slate, to save expensive paper, on which he wrote and figured. If paper was used, writing was done with a quill pen and homemade ink. The drinking fountain was a pump filled with water from a pump on the school grounds. The water was in a dipper from which everyone drank hung in the hall.

"The teachers were not always well prepared. Pay was meager. Men earned as much as \$15 a month, but women earned less, often not more than \$5 a month. Both men and women were expected to be able to teach any of their unruly pupils, many of whom were older and larger than their women teachers. Teachers usually boarded in the homes of their students, spending a week at one home, then moving on to another."

Virginia McGarr, as a teacher in Livonia, was particularly interested in searching out the story on the first schools in the township which became a city 100 years later.

"The first school established in Livonia was the Schwartzburg School which opened in 1800," Mrs. McGarr said. "It was located on the Northwest corner of Ann Arbor Trail and Wayne Road. It was built by public subscription. Later it was moved to the present site of Stark School. A year later Newburgh School was built. The original school was a log cabin."

"In 1844 there were seven elementary school districts which consolidated. Forty-four teachers were required in the eight buildings which existed in the Livonia Public School system.

"The program offered in Livonia schools makes provision for all educable children. In addition to a child-centered curriculum and an enriched curriculum, many special services are offered including, special education, services for the physically handicapped, the blind, the hard of hearing, the speech handicapped, orthopedically handicapped, the mentally retarded and the emotionally disturbed. Remedial reading is taught by special teachers on a regular basis. Summer school courses are offered in skill development and enrichment, and an adult program for occupational re-education and personal development is very well attended."

Patricia Wellard, of Nankin Mills, assembled data about the early schools in that community. "Education in Nankin had an interesting beginning," Mrs. Wellard said. "The first land was given to the Nankin Mills School District by Henry Ford about 1937. Mr. Ford built the first school and named it Nankin Mills School. This school was located in the site of the present day Perrinville School."

LIVONIA SCHOOL CENSUS, 1954
AGE BOYS GIRLS TOTAL
0 1,003 1,006 2,009
1 1,243 1,198 2,441
2 1,413 1,299 2,712
3 1,573 1,451 3,024
4 1,573 1,463 3,036
5 1,562 1,542 3,104
6 1,594 1,547 3,141
7 1,520 1,448 2,968
8 1,433 1,345 2,778
9 1,393 1,339 2,732
10 1,239 1,242 2,481
11 1,212 1,125 2,337
12 1,116 1,049 2,165
13 1,002 965 1,967
14 826 882 1,708
15 840 743 1,583
16 747 711 1,458
17 740 769 1,509
18 480 413 893
19 418 352 771

Tennessee Test
Martin Private Edward L. Durham, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Durham, 27450 Sunnyside, Livonia, recently completed a week of testing and representing the Naval Air Technical Training Center, Memphis, Tenn.

at Farmington Road and Ann Arbor Trail. Whether the old building which stands there now is the original one Ford built is uncertain. Some people say that the original farm building burned and was replaced with the present building.

"The name of the Ford school was later changed to Perrinville. In 1957 the second school, the present Nankin Mills School, was built and dedicated. Desks which had arrived late had to be unpacked. The people of the township, men, women and children helped to get this school ready for its opening day in September.

"Two years later in 1959, Tonquish School was erected. This school was appropriately named for Chief Tonquish, one of the last of the Potawatomi Indians left in the area."

According to the report the first school in Plymouth was located on Shattuck Hill opposite the entrance to the Riverside Cemetery, and a second on North Territorial Road and Moreland Avenue, and a third, traditionally known as the Red School House, was on the farm of J. C. Peterhan.

At the present time, the Plymouth School District is comprised of an area of approximately forty-five square miles with an enrollment teaching 5,650 students in 1963-1964. Two elementary school sites have been bought which will be utilized in the future. By 1960, the report predicts, Plymouth will need two high schools.

The study begins by telling how glaciers once covered all of the suburban area, tells about the periods when warm primeval waters were populated with trilobites and bryozoa, then goes on to show how local governments were formed, the way local industry grew and prospered, how Michigan's transportation "needs and improvements transformed Indian trails into concrete freeways, and it studies the population explosion which projects its skyrocketing rise with charts.

It is the title to this unit which raises the question in some minds. "We know what traffic lights 'needs and what in the world is a trilobite?'"

"A trilobite," explained one researcher who was interviewed in the Franklin High School workshop library, "is a marine invertebrate which lived during the Paleozoic, reaching its maximum during the Cambrian and Ordovician, and becoming extinct in the Permian. Most

of them were an inch or two long, while some reached a length of two feet. Now do you understand?"

"We did," she admitted, "use the word in our title as a device to stimulate interest and teacher's workbook and guide"

search for the word in their own dictionaries. Believe me, we somehow managed to cover everything. From Trilobites to the word in our title as a device to stimulate interest and teacher's workbook and guide"



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