

## The Little Red Schoolhouse Marks 150 Years

In 1873 the Symmes Township Trustees purchased the land at the current northeast corner of Camargo and Given Roads for \$340. Soon afterwards the one room Washington School was constructed. Named for George Washington, its nickname was the Little Red Schoolhouse. It has been a focus of this community's life ever since.

The first group of 52 students was taught by Charles Earhart, who educated all (1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) grades. Scholars sat at long benches behind tables. The room was heated by a pot-bellied wood stove, and later by a coal furnace. Students walked to school and learned the three R's as well as cursive penmanship and geography. A music teacher came once a week, arriving by horse and buggy. She prepared the children for the Christmas recital and the annual end of the year production. Daily pupils engaged in methodical recitations, class by class, and subject by subject.

Washington School looks much as it did when the youth of agrarian Ohio were educated there. Constructed of local brick, it has an entry cloakroom, above which is the belfry. The school bell has a pull rope which descends through the ceiling. When school was in session, the bell was rung four times daily. A full basement once used for coal storage now contains items used for historical programs. Notable architectural features distinguish Washington School. Among them are the double doors, the fanlight transom at the entry, ten tall arched windows with companion shutters, and decorative brickwork accenting the structure's façade. The interior vestibule still serves as a cloakroom, and the main room has hardwood floors and the original blackboard on the north wall. Two doorways which used to provide access to the exterior (and outhouses) now lead to the restrooms and kitchen.

The Little Red Schoolhouse has served the community well for 150 years. Besides its educational function, it was a hub for social activities including the aforementioned student performances, card parties (Euchre and Five Hundred), meetings of a parent organization similar to today's PTAs, oyster suppers, baseball games and also as a polling place on Election Day.

In 1940 the Ohio legislature passed the School Foundation Act in order to develop larger organized school districts, causing many small schools to close, one of which was Washington School. When Indian Hill Village incorporated in 1941, the school became the administrative office of the new Village until the new and current Williamsburg style administration building was completed in 1956. It was utilized as a community building from 1956-1961, then as the home of the Board of Education from 1961-1972, until the Board moved adjacent to the current high school.

In 1973, Village Council invited resident, Tyler Emerson, to form a committee to find a use for the building. With the support of over 100 local families who donated \$100 each, the Indian Hill Historical Museum Association (now known as the Indian Hill Historical Society) was founded. The founders' names are listed in calligraphy on the vestibule wall. The schoolhouse was entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. With generous assistance from Village Council, a modern kitchen, two new restrooms and a handicapped entrance were added to the structure in 2004.

Currently the Little Red Schoolhouse is used for meetings and functions of the Historical Society and by its members for social gatherings. It continues as an historic landmark, and as a place where local citizens congregate for education, enrichment, and many family events and celebrations.