

The following “Recollections” and “Restoration” passages are excerpts from ***History of the Vandalia School*** © 1978 by Nancy Wilkinson Evans, a paper written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Science degree at Indiana State University. The daughter of Ben and Virginia Wilkinson (who raised their family down a county road about 1 ½ miles from Vandalia), she was enrolled in first grade at the school in the fall of 1949.

RECOLLECTIONS

In the year 1949-50 there were five grades in the one room schoolhouse. There were two toilets behind the building and a coal shed to the left of the school. There was a hand pumped well with a cup that hung on the pump and everyone shared.

The coats and lunches were kept in the vestibule. In the center of the classroom was a large coal stove.

. . . it is believed there were five students in the first grade: Charles Haysley, Gale Guthridge, Barbara Kinman, Bonnie White, and Nancy Wilkinson.

Memories include: singing, coloring, and oral reading. An Easter egg hunt stands out in the mind as well as eating fresh garlic that same spring.

RESTORATION

The school has been used as a community building since its closing in May 1951. The building was deteriorating rapidly and the township trustee felt the township could not put money into preserving the building. After looking at the deed records it was found it could not be sold because the deed was worded “Samuel Taylor Trustee of Lafayette Township Owen County Ind. the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do hereby grant bargain sell and convey to the said Samuel Taylor and his successors in office forever the following real estate.”

[Note: Full content of the recorded deed is appended.]

. . . A community survey was taken to find and promote interest in attempting to preserve the building. Two meetings were held in the summer of 1976 to discuss what should and could be done. Money and donated time would be needed. With August 21, 1976 as the first work day the interested community gathered at the building. Labor was provided by the men and a picnic lunch was served at noon by the women. The Saturday work days extended into the fall.

. . . it was a combined community effort that stretched far beyond the county line. The building was raised and new plate and floor joists were put in place. New floor board was added where needed, weatherboarding that matched the original weatherboarding was donated and applied where needed, a primer coat of paint was applied, a new roof was put on the belfry and vestibule, a bell support and bell rope, new door, and the flagpole was restored.

Content of Recorded Handwritten Deed (Owen County, Indiana, Deed Record # 20) for Vandalia School

Rec'd. for Record Decr. 30, 1863, at 4 P.M.

*James M. Davis & wife
to
Trustees Lafayette T.P.*

*This indenture witnesseth that James M. Davis and Ellen Davis his wife in consideration of **twenty five dollars** to us paid by Samuel Taylor Trustee of Lafayette Township Owen County Ind. the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do hereby grant bargain sell and convey to the said Samuel Taylor **and his successors in office forever** the following real estate in Owen County and State of Indiana and described as follows to wit—lot number thirty four, in the town of Vandalia, as described on the town plat in the recorders office of said county—**together with all the privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging** to have and to hold the same to the said Samuel Taylor Trustee **and his successors in office forever**. The grantors their heirs and assigns hereby covenanting with the grantee that the title so conveyed is clear free and unencumbered, that we are lawfully seized of the premises aforesaid as of a sure perfect and indefeasable estate of inheritance in fee simple, and that we will warrant and defend the same against all claims whatsoever.*

In witness whereof the said James M. Davis, and Ellen Davis his wife, has hereunto set their hands and Seals this 25 day of July 1863.

*Jas. M. Davis (seal)
Ellen Davis (seal)*

State of Indiana Owen County ss

Personally appeared before me the subscriber a Justice of the Peace in and for said County James M. Davis, and Ellen Davis his wife the Grantors in the above Conveyance and acknowledged the same to be their voluntary act and Deed,

Witness my hand and seal this twenty fifth day of July 1863

Armstrong Kerr JP (seal)