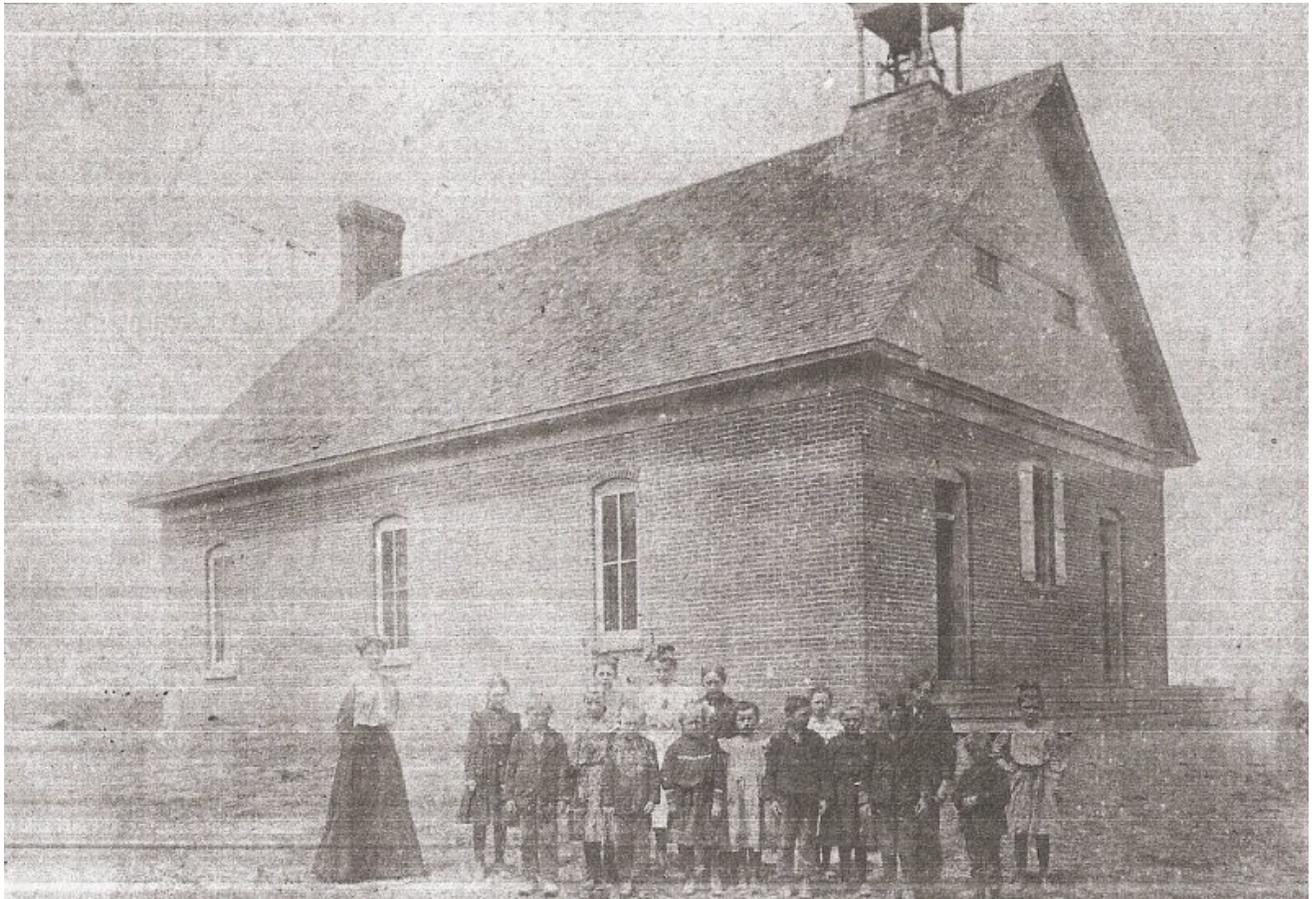


This column recalls the memory of an important landmark in McLeod County's early history—the school of District 12, also known as 'The Kasper School'. Initially established in 1865 and located just to the south of the Bohemian National Cemetery, between Hutchinson and Silver Lake, this school played a vital role in the education of the first Czech immigrant families who settled in McLeod County some 150 years ago.

### **The District 12 (Kasper) School**

By Margaret Knutson, *Hutchinson Leader*, September 6, 1988.

If you use your imagination and listen hard as you, step gingerly through the equipment and mementos of a once lively rural school, you almost hear the scratching of pencils, the rustling of papers, the youthful but stern voice of a teacher and the whispering of boys eager to get out into the school yard to choose sides for a game of baseball.



**Historical photo of the District 12 (Kasper) School, circa the early 1900's.**

Effrey Rutheford Wanous, now "pushing 86," was, from 1907 'through 1915, one of those boys. He is part of a small army of students who proudly attended during its 90 plus years of existence McLeod County School District 12 in Rich Valley Township west of Silver Lake.

Wanous' memories of school are happy, and he continues to feel that an eight- grade, one-room classroom in a rural setting is one of the best places to obtain an education.

"You couldn't help but learn from one another," Wanous said. "There were things being discussed by students in other grades that caught your attention and you just took them in. If you had a brother or sister in another grade, you'd listen to them recite or watch them work at the blackboard and their lessons stayed with you."

Like others in the community, Wanous dreaded the day the school's doors would close for good, but close they did with consolidation with the Silver Lake school district. At public auction in 1959, Wanous bought the school and its contents for \$1,000.

A specially constructed building on the Wanous farm about a mile south of the school on County Road 90 became a mini museum of such treasures as bookcases, books, maps, desks, clock and water cooler, The early records document the school's history. District 12 was organized in 1865. Names of school officials written in an almost calligraphy style in the old pages are a who's who of community leaders before the turn of the century. Names appearing include Joseph Kasper, Frank Urban, Joseph Kadlec, John Kasper, Wencel Urban, John Miskovsky, John Drahos and Frank Danek.

A partial list of school purchases in the 1880s reveals something of the operations of an early school:

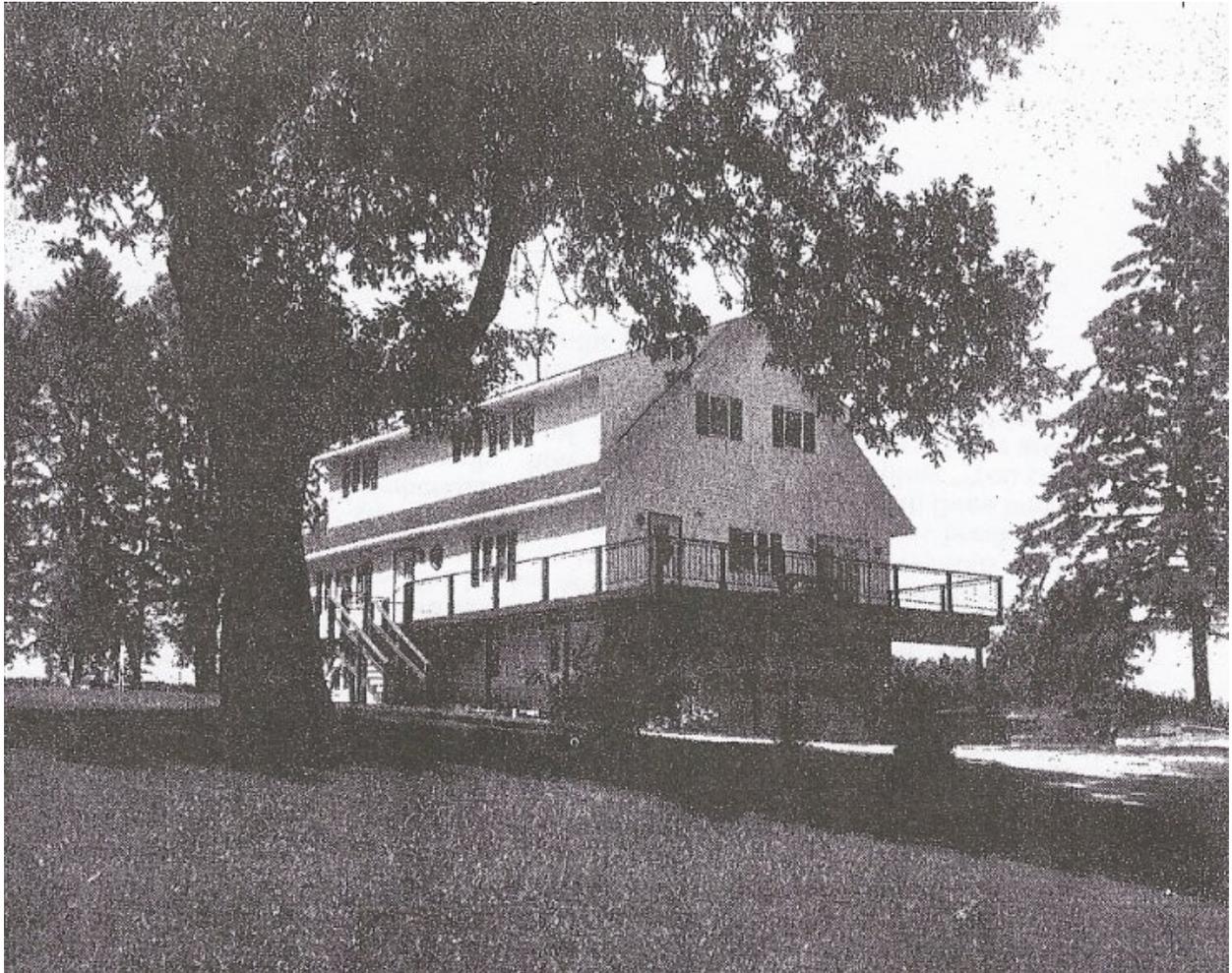
- \$36.43 to American Book Company for text books;
- \$11 (not noted to whom) for one school desk and chair;
- \$3 to Anna Kadlec and Louise Kasper for scrubbing schoolhouse;
- \$2 to Frank Ziek for digging holes for privies;
- \$10.18 to Anton Nuwash for four cords poplar and two cords oak;
- \$40 to Philip Herman for teaching one month;
- \$7 to Anton Jerabek for repairing schoolhouse;
- \$6.50 to John Lutens for insurance on schoolhouse;
- \$40 to Arthur E. Benjamin for teaching one month;
- \$47 to Tom Dubisar for building addition to school house;
- \$12.81 to John Jerabek for materials furnished for schoolhouse addition; and,
- \$1.50 to George Kasper for hauling lumber from Silver Lake.

District 12's first wood school building was replaced in 1900 with a sturdy and attractive brick building which housed students for the next half century. The teachers boarded at the Kasper home just across the road south from the school, Wanous recalls that his favorites were Hazel and Myrtle Malchow and a Miss McDonald from Glencoe.

Wanous kept the schoolhouse for about 20 years. Records show ownership since that time by Alice Ziek, Steve Glesener and LuAnn Glesener, and currently, Gene and Sheryl Eide while the Eides are in Texas, Sheryl tide's brother, sister-in-law and nieces, Pat, Brenda, Jessica and Felicia Fogarty, are house- sitting.

Most of the planning and work in converting the schoolhouse to a beautiful country home was done, according to the Fogartys, during the Glesener ownership. Some of the brick is still visible, along with refurbished hardwood floors and wainscoating. The home features comfortable living and dining areas along with four bedrooms and three baths. A deck on two sides, south and east, provides a view of the surrounding countryside as well as outdoor living accommodation.

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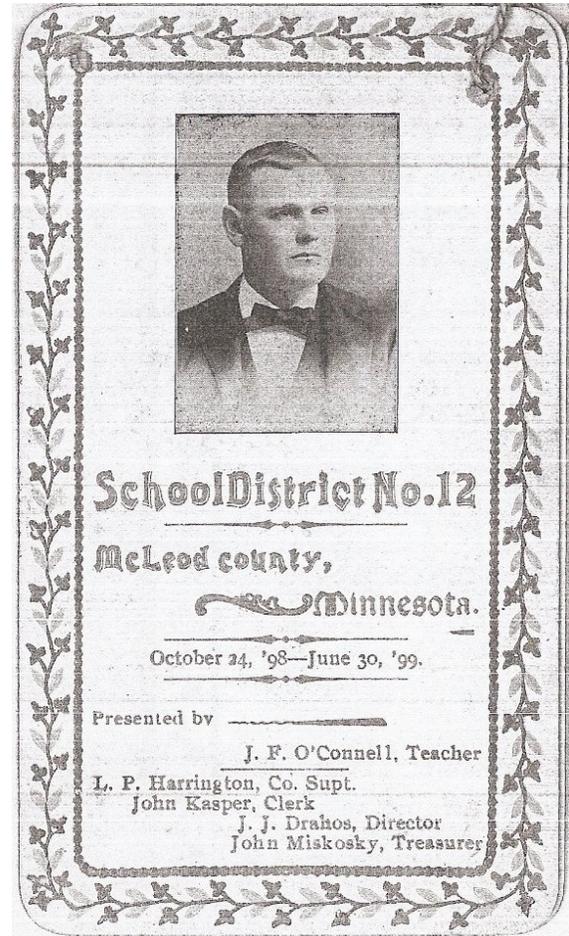


**New life was given to a country school closed by consolidation in the late 1950s. Former McLeod County District 12 school is now home for Gene and Sheryl Eide and their daughter, Krista, 8. Memories abound for Effrey Wanous among the equipment and mementos he has of the country school he attended. Wanous bought the school and its contents for \$1,000 at the 1959 auction (Staff photo by Margaret Knutson, Hutchinson Leader, September 6, 1988).**

Wanous appreciates how the old school was given new life. The keeper of the history of old District 12, Wanous is a storehouse of countless other memories as well. For instance, he recalls how the lush farmland west of Silver Lake was carved out of deep woods, and how agriculture in the area has changed over the years.

The Wanous family came to America from Czechoslovakia in 1858, settling first in Texas with other families from their homeland: Border fighting in that area prompted several of the pioneers to seek a safer part of the new world, They headed north to Minnesota to become squatters in a new' county called McLeod, established just two years prior. Making the move with the Wanouses and settling in the same proximity were the Kasper and Nuwash families. All homesteaded their properties following the Homestead Act in 1862, each obtaining title to 160 acres. The Wanous acreage was in Rich Valley Sec-

tions 5, 6 and 7. The "heavy equipment" used prior to the turn of the century and for a time thereafter to chop down trees, grub out stumps and roots and to clear the land for the plow consisted of man and horsepower.



**Above left: photo of the late Effrey Rutherford Wanous (1901-2000), caretaker of the history of the District 12 School. Above right: program from the school, 1899.**

As did most pioneer farmers, the Wanouses loved their horses. For a time after rail lines were established, wild broncos from the west were shipped to the station at Brownton where farmers could buy them.

"Our Sunday game," Wanous grins, was breaking those horses. If you did a good job breaking them and they trusted you, you had wonderful animals that would work until they dropped."

A job Wanous claims not minding was breaking up new ground with three horses and a walking plow, "You could take your shoes off, the ground was so mellow, and it felt soft and cool on your feet,"

### **Mluvíte Český? Do You Speak Czech?**

Opakování matka moudrosti - Repetition is the mother of wisdom.

**As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!**

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