

PETOSKEY HIGH SCHOOL

First Graduation 1885
Petoskey, Michigan

The Howard Street School built in 1876 by Peter Bremmeyr for \$1700, it was a crude two-story building and in appearance was nothing like the beautiful building and campus which occupy the spot today. The old school bell in the belfry called the children to school at nine o'clock in the morning and again at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Andrew Porter left his home in Pennsylvania one morning in the month of May 1852. He was traveling to an area called Petoskey. There he was to erect a mission school. Mr. Porter arrived at Bear River and was greeted by Daniel Wells, a native Indian, who had requested the school to Rev. R. Dougherty.

After a great deal of exploration by Mr. Porter a site was selected for the mission school. It lay on a highland west of Bear River. This location is now the intersection of Spring (U.S. 131) and Porter Streets on the west side of Bear River.

The school was erected of lumber sent from Traverse City by Rev. Dougherty. (The problem of labor to transport the lumber from its unloading point on the shore to the building site was solved by the voluntary aid of Indians from the surrounding communities). The building was sixteen feet wide and thirty feet long containing two rows of benches and a teacher's desk. It had plastered walls and to insure the presence of children for the full day, bread and molasses were served at noon. At first all of the students were Indians. Later they were joined by Andrew Porter's son.

The school was funded by the Presbyterian board of missions and later by government Indian school funds. Soon both funds were exhausted and the school was discontinued.

The closing of the Porter Mission left the Petoskey area without educational facilities. And so was the situation when Rachel Oakley arrived. Upon seeing the great need for a school Mrs. Oakley purchased for thirty dollars one of a group of three shanties where the Petoskey Hotel now stands. She used one for a home, another of the three became the school, a very crude structure consisting of upright boards and a

lean-to for wood. A barrel was used for the drinking water. This was a community school for white students at first, and was not under state support. Thus, in 1876, we find the first school within the limits of the Village of Petoskey, as it was later incorporated (1879).

During the summer of 1876, these pioneers who lived in the roughest of shanties scattered about through the woods or crowded in small rooms over stores, began to realize the necessity of a school. Several meetings were held. A piece of ground was purchased "out in the woods," and after a sufficient space was cleared, a square barn-like two story building was erected.

The attendance during the first year reached over one hundred.

Although the school kept increasing in numbers there were but two teachers employed until the fall of "78" when Mr. Barber was employed as principal with two assistants.

During the summer of "79" an addition was built to the Howard Street building doubling the capacity, making four large rooms. The attendance kept increasing more readily now. D. Metz was engaged as principal in "79" and taught nearly two years.

It was the summer of 1881 that the spacious high school building was built on the summit of Lake Street hill, site of 818 E. Lake Street. It was supposed that this would give ample room for years to come. The school however, kept pace with the steady growth of Petoskey, and two large rooms

were added to the Howard Street School in 1885.

In the year 1889 Petoskey was faced with the total destruction of the Lake Street School. The fire brigades could not save the structure from its fate. The exact circumstances of the fire are not known. M. O. Graves was then superintendent. The fire much disturbed Superintendent Graves, he left after one year. Miss May Cooper was the only person to graduate in the year 1890.

Petoskey's second high school was built in the year 1890 in the location of the Central Gym. It housed the high school on the top floor and part of the grades on the ground floor. The only school construction in the remaining years of the 1800's was the Lincoln School in the location of the present Lincoln School playground in 1895.

1900 gave rise to the Sheridan School. Which is now used as North Central Michigan College student lounge on Howard Street. Following in the footsteps of Petoskey's progress came the Edgewater School in 1903 and the present Petoskey Junior High School on the corner of State and Howard Streets in 1913.

1929 tore down the walls of Petoskey's second high school to make room for the present Central Elementary and gym located on State Street. With the construction of the new Central School came the remodeling of the present Junior High School. Mr. H. Carl Spittler held the office of Superintendent of Petoskey School system during this time.

The last seventeen years from

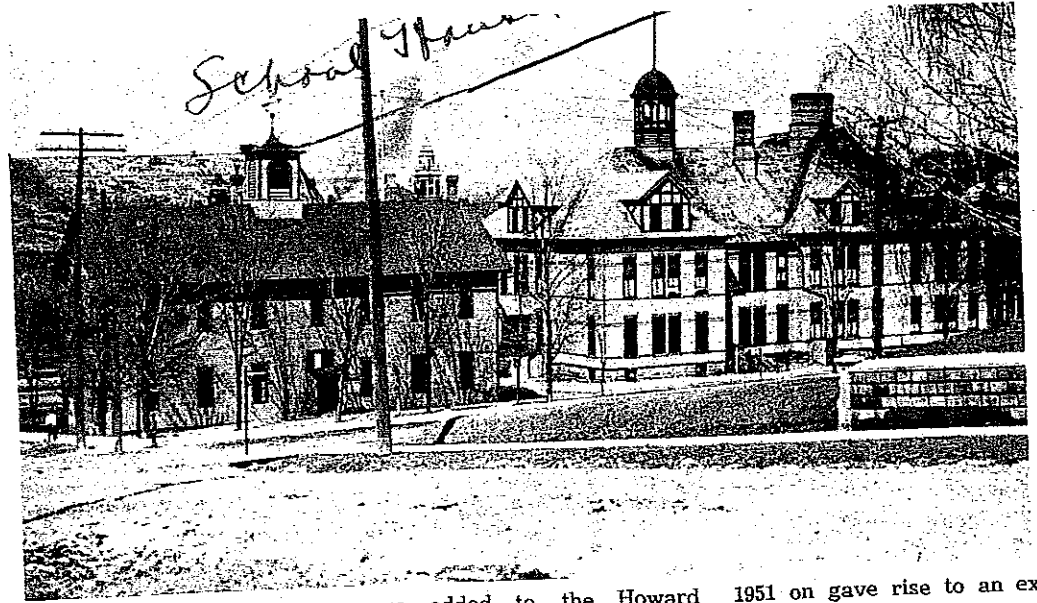
1951 on gave rise to an extensive building program. The present Lincoln Elementary, the Agricultural Building now used as an Auto Mechanics School at the corner of Grove and Waukazoo, in 1958 the new Sheridan School and an addition built to the present Central School of a cafeteria and music room.

Petoskey can be proud of its schools. A perfect example is one the most recent additions to our system, the Ottawa School built in 1964 and recipient of the award naming it one of the best school designs for the year 1967. The growth of educational buildings continued on till the completion of the Petoskey High School located at the end of Hill Street in 1966, its capacity is six hundred students.

So in very brief form we have reviewed the history of Petoskey Public Schools. The story has been one of progress. Past generations, realizing the value of educational opportunity, built in this community an institution which has served us well.

This can not be the conclusion of this story of progress for we have not mentioned the new step taken by the Petoskey area in its construction of North Central Michigan College. N.C.M.C. is supported by tax monies from Emmet County and the State of Michigan to fill an educational need, much the same as Mrs. Rachel Oakley saw the need for the Petoskey area in 1870's. Little did Andrew Porter realize what a shadow he would cast on the Bear River area and Petoskey when he left his Pennsylvania home many

years past.



PETOSKEY SCHOOL HISTORY

First Petoskey High School Commencement 1885
Program at Mitchell Hall

The Petoskey Record
Wednesday, July 1, 1885

The First Commencement of the Petoskey High School.

A big jump from Mrs. Alley's board shanty in 1874, to the white dresses, flowers, Diplomas, and enthusiasm of June 23, 1885.

THE CLASS OF '85 GRADUATES WITH HONORS.

In 1874 Petoskey's only educational institution was a board shanty located a few rods Northwest of the RECORD office, in which Mrs. R. Alley presided over a few barefooted urchins. To-day Petoskey boasts of a graded school system second to none in the state; nine large schools with nearly 500 pupils in attendance; and a corps of thorough and efficient instructors trained for their work by the ablest normal teachers of the state.

The development of our educational system in so short a time, and the high state of discipline and efficiency to which our schools have attained, is a matter of great pride to the people of Petoskey. Last Thursday evening, the first class completing the prescribed course of study was graduated, and the occasion called out an immense concourse of citizens. Long before the hour announced Mitchell Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity, and scores and hundreds of disappointed people were turned away from the doors. The stage was elaborately decorated by class "B" ('86) assisted by Prof. Ewing, Miss Ruddiman, Miss Burt and Miss Petrie, and presented a beautiful appearance from the front. Upon the stage were seated the orator of the evening Rev. W. S. Potter of Ionia, ex-President Col. J. D. Tall, ex-President W. L. Curtis, and President P. B. Wachtel, the School Board, Ministers of the several churches and Prof. Ewing and Miss Mina Ruddiman of the High School. Owing to the limited capacity of the stage the members of the graduating class were seated on the floor of the auditorium immediately in front of the stage.

The first number of the programme was the "Grand Galop de Concert" of Ketterer, for four hands, finely rendered by Mrs. Lou Blood and Miss Stella Brackett.

2nd. Prayer by Rev. H. E. Davis,
3d. Salutatory—by Frank W. Howe,
which was well considered, and well delivered.

4th. Song—by Mrs. W. J. McCune.

5th. Address—by Rev. W. S. Potter.

Mr. Potter's address "The School of Life" was both eloquent and practical; and we would be glad did space permit to give a synopsis of the argument.

6th. Coming thro' the Rye, Clarionette Solo—by Walter Connable.

7th. Presentation of Diplomas.

The class took position upon the stage and Dr. H. T. Calkins President of the School Board, in a neat little speech conferred Diplomas upon the class of '85 as follows:

Frank W. Howe, Martha A. Warne, Ella M. Hutchinson, Millie M. Hitchcock, Flora M. Davis, Mary E. Gaumer, Jennie C. Seibert and Fred A. Howe.

8th. Esmeralda, Song—Mrs. W. J. McCune.

9th. Valedictory—Fred A. Howe.

This young gentleman made a very favorable impression indeed. His address was simple, unaffected, direct, and gave abundant evidence of both culture and good taste.

10th. Corinne, Clarionette Solo—Walter Connable. Not only this but the other selections were greatly appreciated by the audience.

Following the exercises the benediction was pronounced by Rev. G. W. Sherman and the first commencement of the Petoskey High School was over.