

The History Corner
Rich Sill
November 2004

North Shore Elementary School Beginning

For any of us who use or visit North Shore Community School, especially the teachers, students and parents who frequent it on a regular basis, the new improvements in the parking lot and driveway are a very welcome change. If it seemed to you as if the muddy conditions of the parking area each spring, the icy and treacherous sidewalks of every winter, the puddles, the potholes, and the never ending problem of parking, are situations that we have dealt with forever at school, well, let me assure you-we have.

For those of us who haven't lived here our entire lives we may ask, why? Why, for instance was North Shore School built in a location that was so obviously low and wet, especially when higher ground with improved drainage clearly lay just a few hundred feet to the south? For the answer to that question we have to go back more than forty years. By the late 1950's it was becoming clear that a new elementary was needed for our community. School # 93, better known as Bloomingdale School, had been built in 1922 and was showing its age. Having only three classrooms, the school, located just east of the crossroads of Shelton and Ryan, was by then serving only students in grades 1-4. Clover Valley High School, the community's other school, was made up of grades 1- 12. Both schools at the time were a part of what was known as the St. Louis County Unorganized School District, a large, geographically diverse, and loosely organized district made up of dozen of schools scattered across rural St. Louis County.

Because of our community's affiliation with the St. Louis County School District the decision on a replacement for the Bloomingdale School was not a local matter but one that needed to be determined by their school board. In time the decision to move forward was approved, a replacement site was sought, and eventually a piece of land was chosen. Located at the intersection of the Ryan and Lismore Roads the property that was selected for the new school was on the original homestead site of the Erick Johnson family. The Johnson's had farmed the acreage and for several years had also operated a small store out of their house. And herein lies the answer to question of why the school is where it is. The family offered to sell acreage to the district, but did not want to part with all of the original homestead property. They optioned to retain the twenty acres on the corner, choosing to sell only the north twenty, the lowland where the school now sets.

The school board accepted the restrictions and the purchase was completed. Soon architectural plans were being drawn up and bids were being requested for construction. Everything was moving forward when a Johnson family member communicated to the board that they had changed their minds and were now willing to include the southern twenty in the sale as well. But by then it was too late. St. Louis County Superintendent W. W. Salmi had all ready made the announcement that Willie Construction Co. had been awarded the bid to build the school on the original north site at a cost of \$471,455.00. At the time many local people expressed concern that the selection process had been flawed and the school would be better placed on the higher ground to the south. But by then there was no looking back. Ground was scheduled to be broken and construction was soon underway. In May of 1961 Bloomingdale closed its doors for the last time and in September of that year the newly completed school was opened and into it 265 students in grades 1-6 entered for the first time. Three months later on Sunday, November 5, 1961 an event was held formally dedicating the newest addition to the St. Louis County School District, North Shore Elementary School.

Now, over forty years later, we are through another transition-from North Shore Elementary to North Shore Community School. Many things have changed in those years. We have evolved from a St. Louis County School to a Lake Superior District School to an independent community school in our own right. But even with all the changes, one thing remains constant. Those twenty acres to the south are still a lot higher.