

# WARNER'S SCHOOL HOUSE

The Littlest Red School House  
Upper Hanover Township  
1856-1948

When it opened in November 1856, Warner's School House was the tenth and smallest of 10 schools in the Upper Hanover Township School District.

The Upper Hanover District was responsible for educating all school-age children in the area between Hereford Township on the west and Marlborough Township on the east. From 1854 to 1966, the district covered a small part of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, about 35 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

In 1854 and 1855, the school district built nine school houses in and around Greenville, Pennsburg and Red Hill, villages in Upper Hanover Township. Most of the schools were a standard 25 feet wide and 33 feet long. Several had bell towers.

In 1856, when it came time for School No. 10 "on the road above Greenville to Kraussdale," the school board seemed less eager to proceed. For the children of the farms along the two branches of Macoby Creek, the board decided to build a smaller school, 24 feet square. The school had one room and no bell tower.

This was Warner's School House.

For \$30, Henry Y. Schultz and his wife, Elizabeth, sold the school district a quarter acre of their farm for Warner's School. (On Oct. 23, 1858, Henry Schultz would die when he was thrown from a horse.)

The school house cost \$492.78 to erect. From September to November 1856, the structure was built "near the house of Jesse Yeakel." Yeakel, 36, was part of a family who had lived in Upper Hanover for generations.

## **First called Yeakel's**

In its first year, the Warner's School House was called Yeakel's School House. Its first blackboard was a wooden board painted black. Amos Krauss was its first teacher. Like the teachers in the nine other Upper Hanover schools, Krauss taught students from first through eighth grade.

As the school year began in November 1856, the Upper Hanover School Board "Resolved that the same books be continued in the schools that have heretofore been used, and that the Testament also be used in addition."

On Nov. 7, 1857, the school board minutes say, “One year after building, Warner’s needs a new privy.” That was the board’s first official reference to the school as Warner’s.

### **Warner, the distiller**

Nearby, the house of Jesse Yeakel apparently had become the home of William and Margaret (Arner) Warner, who moved their family from Phillipsburg, New Jersey. William Warner, 44, head distiller at a Phillipsburg whiskey distillery, would build or expand his family farmhouse about 450 feet northwest of the school house.

Theodore Warner, William’s son, might have attended the Warner’s School House from 1857 to 1862, roughly fourth through eighth grades. His older brother Jesse and younger sister Martha might have gone to the school, too. They spoke, read and wrote English at school, but also spoke German. They spoke Pennsylvania German and English at home.

*Imagine Theodore’s mother stirring him from his sleep on a school morning. “Weck uff, Theodor!” she might say. “Rischt dich fer in die Schul geh. Draame kumme net waahr wann du net uffweckscht.” (“Wake up, Theodore! Prepare yourself for school. Dreams can’t come true if you never wake up.”)*

In 1857, the school year began on Nov. 9 for a four-and-a-half-month school term. At the Warner’s School House, Theodore would have had these teachers: John K. Houck, 1857-58; Daniel K. Kepner, 1858-59; John K.

Houck, 1859-60; Benjamin F. Dotts, 1860-61; and M.S. Keel, 1861-62. Each teacher’s salary was about \$30 for a 22-day month.

At the end of 1857, Theodore’s 3-year-old sister, Ellen, and infant brother, Edward, became seriously ill, possibly suffering from a common contagious disease for which 19th-century medicine was ineffective. Baby Edward died Dec. 16. Ellen died eight days later.

In 1859, the Upper Hanover School Board ordered that teachers use these books: “Spelling Books, Comly’s – Bonsal’s Edition; Reading Books, Saunders Series; Arithmetic, Stoddard’s Mental, Stoddard & Davis; Geography, Mitchel’s and Atlas; Grammar, Smith and Brown’s; Mensuration [weights and measures], Bonnycastles; German Books, A.B.C. and Spelling Book; Psalter [Book of Psalms] and New Testament.”

The five Saunders’ Readers included popular poetry and short stories of the 1850s, and rules on the “elementary sounds of the letters.” The books’ many stories taught moral lessons in honesty, generosity, democracy and hard work.

*The readings told stories of Columbus, Hiawatha, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and the Marquis de Lafayette. Abraham Lincoln, not yet a president, was not mentioned. Saunders’ Fourth Reader had a “Bible legend” about a Revolutionary War patriot named Warner. In this story, a pro-British Tory’s life is spared when Warner’s little daughter opens a Bible and points to the passage, “Love your enemies.”*

On Nov. 5, 1859, the school board bought a new stove for Warner's School House.

On Dec. 1, 1860, Theodore Warner's oldest sister, Catharine, got married to Vincent Reubert in Phillipsburg, N.J.

In 1861, the Upper Hanover District built another school house near the New Goshenhoppen Church. It was called the Church School, and because it was at the edge of a swamp, it also was called Bullfrog Academy.

On Aug. 9, 1861, Theodore Warner's oldest brother, Reuben, was back in Phillipsburg, N.J., on Aug. 26, 1862, to marry Anna Beers. In the meantime, Theodore probably quit school to work full-time on the farm.

### **German still taught**

In 1863, the school district's authorized texts were: "Spellers and Readers, Saunders Series; Arithmetics, Stoddards and Greenlief's; Geography, Warren's; Grammar, Smith Bullion's. Mensuration, etc. at the discretion of the teachers. German to be taught as heretofore."

In autumn 1863, teacher Oswin F. "Fred" Waage read to his Warner's pupils the speech that President Lincoln had delivered Nov. 19 at the dedication of the Gettysburg battlefield cemetery. (The battle had been July 1-3, 1863.) Waage also was a Lutheran pastor at St. Paul's Church in Pennsburg.

After eight years of renting, William Warner bought the Upper Hanover farm from Jesse Yeakel on March 31, 1865. He paid \$5,000 for about 75 acres.

By 1870, Theodore's brother Jesse, 24, had married and was living in the Warner farmhouse with his wife, Susan (Shiffert) Warner, 20. The Shiffert family must have been significantly involved in the area because, in 1871, the Warner's School House briefly was called Shiffert's School House. It's possible William Warner moved back to the Lehigh Valley at that time, leaving his sons to take care of the farm.

On June 18, 1871, in the village of Greenville, Upper Hanover Township, Theodore Warner married C. Elizabeth Arrowsmith of Easton.

### **11 township schools**

By 1872, the name Warner's School House stuck for good. At this time, the other Upper Hanover schools were Schwenk's, Croll's (also called Perkiomen Heights, Haring's and Jacob's), Pewee (Bethesda and Schultz's), Palm (Gery's), Reed's, Kleinsville, Church (Bullfrog Academy), Red Hill (Hillegassville), Greenville and Pennsburg.

In 1872, Henry J. Smith was teacher at Warner's. Smith later would become the Upper Hanover justice of the peace, and for nine years he would be part owner of the old Warner farm.

Also in 1872, part of the Upper Hanover School District broke away. The village of Pennsburg left the school

district to form its own district. Soon after, the Greenville and Red Hill schools also split off. Warner's School and the others remained in the Upper Hanover District.

### **Brick building in 1875**

Warner's School House was rebuilt from June to October 1875. The small square building that went up in 1856 came down. In its place rose a one-room brick building that would serve schoolchildren for 73 years.

The new structure had red brick walls three bricks thick. The school house was 26 feet wide and 31 feet long, closer to the district's standard size. The classroom ceiling was 10 feet high. The building still had no bell tower.

Construction cost \$984.76, and material from the old building was sold for \$38.70. Teachers still were paid \$30 a month. Now the school year would last six months, opening in October.

In 1875, the village of Greenville was incorporated as a borough called East Greenville, separate from Upper Hanover Township. The "East" was added to Greenville because there already was a Greenville in Mercer County, western Pennsylvania. Still in Upper Hanover, Warner's School House was less than a mile from the new East Greenville line.

According to an 1877 map, the Warner farm was this year in the hands of a B. Miller, who might have been renting. William Warner had a daughter named Maria,

who married a Miller, so B. Miller might have been a Warner son-in-law.

The 1880 census shows a William and Margaret Warner were living in the borough of East Greenville, about a mile from the Warner farm.

### **Warners leave**

William Warner sold his farm to George Kurtz on Nov. 7, 1881. By now, Warner was living in Hanover Township, Lehigh County, just north of Allentown. His son Theodore had moved to Phillipsburg, N.J., where he became a railroad car inspector, a carman.

Kurtz paid William Warner \$6,000 for the property, but by June 6, 1885, the land was resold at a sheriff's sale to Henry J. Smith, the district justice and former Warner's school teacher, and Nathaniel Beideman Keely, a former area teacher and proprietor of the Keely House hotel in East Greenville.

In 1885, Wentling's School House was added to the Upper Hanover schools. Now the district had nine schools for grades 1-8.

The village of Pennsburg broke away from Upper Hanover Township to become a borough in 1887; Red Hill did the same in 1902.

### **Literary Gazette**

On Dec. 2, 1887, Warner's School teacher Frank Y. Hoffman founded the Warner's Literary Society. The purpose was to publish anonymously the writings of Warner graduates in a *Warner's Literary Gazette*. With the motto, "You Can If You Will," the Literary Society was active six or seven years and would reappear briefly in the 1930s.

Alice L. Welker was appointed teacher at Warner's in 1888. She probably was the school's first woman teacher. Like other teachers in the region, she had two years' training at Kutztown Normal School. She would receive her diploma only after the Upper Hanover School District approved of her teaching. In 1889, the school board recommended that Kutztown grant Welker a diploma.

In 1892, first-grader Katie Derr met third-grader Jonathan Wasser at Warner's School. Jonathan carved their initials, "KD & JW," in a brick next to the school's front door. Over the next decades, Jonathan and Katie would fall in love and marry, and their two daughters, Anna and Vera, also would attend Warner's.

On Jan. 23, 1894, Henry Smith and N.B. Neely sold the old Warner farm to Thomas J. and Emma L. Trumbauer, who called the property "Fairview Farm." The Trumbauers would farm in Upper Hanover for 16 years. George Krauss managed the raising of beef cattle for the Trumbauers.

From 1894 to 1899, Warner's teacher Dan K. Dotterer was paid \$35 a month.

In 1896, a year after the school year expanded to seven months, the school board voted to renovate Warner's School House. They decided to replace part of the floor, move the coal stove closer to the center of the room, install a natural slate blackboard, and plaster with cement the east wall outside, the wall farthest from the road.

### **Bell added in 1901**

In the summer of 1901, the school expanded to 26 by 38 feet. This extended the building's front 7 feet out, to include a small cellar, an entrance hall over the cellar and a 9-foot-8-inch-tall bell tower up top.

The right side of the entrance hall had a wood trap door to the basement. Coal was stored in the cellar. It was delivered through a small ground-level window facing the road. The rest of the building still had no basement.

According to school records, Oscar Schmoyer, who graduated from the school in May 1901, collected money for the bell.

In the new entrance hall, students stowed their coats and lunches. Girls' belongings were kept on the left, boys' on the right. The shelves were far left and right. The hall's floor was wood, as was the old classroom floor.

The exterior of the building addition was red brick, matching the brick in the basic structure. The hall had a window on each side of a front porch, and a third window, less than half the size of the others, centered between the porch top and the building's roof peak.

Just above the porch top was a dedication stone, indicating the bell-tower addition was built in 1901.

Outside the school house was a pump with a handle to draw drinking water from a well. Looking out the front door, pupils could see the pump a little to the left. The teacher typically would ask a boy to fetch a bucket of water from the pump. Inside, the pupils would drink from the bucket with cups or a “community dipper.”

### **Boys’ and girls’ outhouses**

About 75 feet from the front door were two outhouses, the boys’ close to the road, the girls’ a distance from the road.

When the finished addition opened in September 1901, Daisy Gehman was the first teacher to ring the bell in the new bell tower. The school house had no electricity, and would not have electric lights until its last three years. After she left the school, Gehman would become a Schwenkfelder Church missionary to China.

In 1901, Pennsburg offered one year of high school. In 1902, East Greenville did the same. In 1908, Red Hill started two years of high school.

On April 4, 1910, Thomas and Emma Trumbauer sold the old Warner farm to Charles M. Burger, who then died Nov. 16, 1910. Burger’s widow, Laura, would resell the farm to Ambrose F. Spohn on March 20, 1912.

In 1911, Upper Hanover farmer Harvey C. Jones was elected to a seat on the Upper Hanover School Board.

As a board member, he would represent Warner’s School House and the Church (Bullfrog) School House. Until 1944, Jones would store classroom supplies at his home and distribute them to the two schools.

In 1913-14 and 1914-15, Mabel Miller was the Warner’s teacher, though H.M. Buck had to fill in for her the last eight days of the 1913-14 school year because Mabel Miller had the mumps.

### **Millers move to farm**

In March 1917, Charles Louis Miller and his wife, Lydia Antonia (Schmidt) Miller, took a train from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, to East Greenville. With them, they brought about 10 cows, a Holstein dairy bull, and a black and white collie named Pete. In an open boxcar, Charles Miller endured the cold trip with the cows. Lydia Miller rode a passenger car with her younger sister, Verena.

At the East Greenville railroad station, Charles Miller hired a boy to help, and the two drove the cows to the old Warner farm near the Warner’s School House. On March 12, 1917, Miller bought the farm from Ambrose Spohn for \$5,900.

The Millers raised corn, wheat, oats, barley and hay on their dairy farm of about 75 acres. The crops fed the cows. The cows’ milk paid the bills. Two horses pulled plows; they also hauled milk to the East Greenville Creamery. A treadmill machine, powered by a horse and sometimes by the bull, ran the Millers’ thresher and seed-cleaning mill. Soon, a 1916 tractor was added to the farm equipment.

Originally from Philadelphia, Charles Miller was a machinist and farmer. Born in Hubbleton, Wisconsin, Lydia Miller was a teacher in her home state.

On Nov. 24, 1917, the Upper Hanover School Board ordered the purchase of American flags for all district schools.

On Monday morning, Nov. 18, 1918, Warner's teacher Marie Ott stopped her class and asked her pupils to listen hard. In the distance, the area's church bells were ringing in celebration. "They must have signed the Armistice," she said. The Germans had signed the Armistice ending World War I.

In 1919, East Greenville built a four-year high school, called "Old Main."

### **Lydia Miller, teacher**

In 1920-21 and 1921-22, Lydia (Schmidt) Miller was teacher at Warner's School House. Teacher's pay in the district now was \$70 to \$95 a month. Mrs. Miller brought her two baby girls, Grace and Ruth, to school with her.

Mrs. Miller discovered that a few of her first-graders could hardly speak English. At home, their first language was Pennsylvania German. She could speak High German almost as well as English, but she still had trouble understanding the Pennsylvania dialect. With daily lessons and practice with their classmates, the

students gradually adopted English and English grammar.

In 1922, Mrs. Miller retired temporarily from teaching to care for an expanding family. Eventually, she would have four daughters and two sons.

In 1924, Pennsburg opened a four-year high school.

Warner's sixth-grader Verna Schofer missed the whole 1924-25 school year. One after another, she, her six sisters and two brothers came down with chicken pox, measles and mumps. The county health officer constantly had a "Quarantined" sign on their house on Mill Hill Road. No one in the house was permitted to go to school if anyone in the house had a contagious disease.

### **Chimney goes up in 1925**

In 1925, a chimney was added at Warner's, at the rear of the building. The chimney was close to the center of the rear wall, but offset to the right of the roof peak. The coal stove was moved from the center of the room. The big pot-bellied stove, shielded in a large tin cylinder, was positioned in the left front corner, not far from the chimney outside. To the left of the stove, on the floor near the wall, a coal bucket was stored.

The teacher's desk sat front and center on the teacher's platform, a step up the main classroom floor. The desk had two big drawers on the teacher's right, a shallow drawer over the teacher's legs. The stove also was on the teacher's platform, as was an organ, to the far right.

Slate blackboards extended across the front wall and behind the stove. It is not clear whether the blackboard covered a window at the left front of the class; the window might have been added many years later. Each of the longer side walls had two windows.

A clock kept time up front, above the blackboard at the center of the wall. The clock had a key box attached to its bottom. To the far right of the clock was an American flag, tacked to the front wall. A cupboard was in the room's left rear corner.

### **Oranges for Christmas**

Dan K. Dotterer, who taught at Warner's in the 1890s, returned in 1925. A disciplinarian, he was "the guy who restored order" after other teachers had been intimidated by a few unruly pupils. So at Christmastime, when the old man opened the classroom cupboard doors, his students were surprised to see an avalanche of oranges pouring to the floor. They were his Christmas gifts to the pupils, and the children were delighted.

### **Poetry recitals**

In early 1926, Warner's fourth-grader Grace Miller entered the Upper Hanover School District declamation contest, a poetry recital. She won for her dramatic presentation. Her poem was Eugene Field's "The Duel," which begins, "The gingham dog and the calico cat Side by side on the table sat." Weeks later, someone else won the regional contest at Ursinus College, where

Grace discovered most of her competitors were reciting the same poem.

At his June 9, 1927, graduation ceremony at Palm Schwenkfelder Church, eighth-grader LeRoy Schoenly recited from memory a four-page poetic essay. The wistful essay, written for LeRoy by Mr. Dotterer, was on "the hope and promise of a new spring and a new life."

In late 1927, student Foster Schultz corrected his teacher Helen Browning's pronunciation of Yosemite. She called it Yosemigh. She didn't appreciate the challenge.

### **Tongue frozen to pump**

In winter of early 1929, second-grader William Schultz licked the iron handle of the frigid water pump outside the school, and his tongue froze to the handle. After a struggle, he pulled his tongue free. It hurt, but he healed.

In fall 1929, Angela Nutter became the first and only black pupil ever to enroll at Warner's School. Black children were so rare in Pennsylvania Dutch country that on the night before the school year began, fourth-grader Vera Wasser's father, Jonathan, sat down with her and had a talk about open-mindedness.

"Now, Vera," he said, "there's going to be a little girl at school tomorrow, and her skin is going to be a little darker than yours. But remember, you are no better than she, and she is no better than you. Just treat her like everybody else."

### **Angela Nutter**

Perhaps the other students had similar guidance, or perhaps these children hadn't been exposed to the foolish ideas that might have spoiled their natural friendliness. For more than a year, until she moved away from the farm her father was caring for along Route 29, Angela was just another Warner's schoolgirl. She was special like everyone else.

In 1929-30 and 1930-31, Sarah (Kurtz) Acker was the teacher at Warner's School House. Mrs. Acker took part in her students' field hockey games. Each child found a suitable stick in the woods. Then, handling a hockey ball with the sticks, one side could score by tapping the ball to the school building. In the other direction, the team scored by shooting the ball between the outhouses.

### **Radio antenna**

On Monday, Sept. 15, 1930, before school, Mrs. Acker's husband lugged a heavy battery-operated radio into the classroom. He set up an antenna on the roof and ripped his shirt in the effort. Then, on three afternoons, Mrs. Acker let her class listen to the live radio broadcasts of the America's Cup sailing race in Newport, R.I. On Sept. 18, the pupils heard descriptions of the American boat Enterprise winning the fourth and decisive race against the British yacht Shamrock V.

In 1931, each school house in the district received framed pictures of George Washington. Warner's School House also received new desks, a new coat of paint inside, and a new door.

In late 1931, teacher Paul Bitting "clubbed" a pupil for hammering nails into the tires of his car.

By 1932, Warner's School had seen the last of its pupils who spoke Pennsylvania German as a first language. About half of the children heard German at home, but all spoke English in their daily lives. This year, the nearby Palm Schwenkfelder Church stopped offering services in High German. Now all services were in English.

### **Horse through snow**

In a fierce snowstorm in early 1934, Frank Roman took his younger sister Thomasella into Warner's School on a farm horse. "Tommy" was in sixth grade, and Frank already was out of school. They rode more than a half mile from Kraussdale Road through deep drifts and blinding snow. At the school house door, they found Mr. Bitting. "No school today!" he shouted.

*On a typical school day, pupils would walk or bicycle to Warner's School House from as far as a mile away. The teacher would start the morning by ringing the school bell. Once the pupils were seated, the teacher would lead the class in the Pledge of Allegiance and in the Lord's Prayer. The teacher also would read from the Bible's Book of Psalms.*

*Then the teacher would call one grade at a time to the school room's front seats, starting with the first-graders. The teacher would go over the pupils' lessons, give them classwork to complete at their desks or at the blackboard, and then call the next highest grade to the*

*front, moving up through the eighth grade. Most often, there were only three, four or five pupils in each grade.*

*Class would be interrupted by morning and afternoon recess, and by the noon “dinner” break. The teacher would call the students back by ringing the school bell, or by giving that honor to one of the pupils. At recess, the children might play Ball-E-Over or Kick the Wicky.*

### **Ball-E-Over**

*In Ball-E-Over, one group of pupils would yell “Ball-E-Over!” and someone in a group on the other side of the school would throw a ball over the roof. Whoever caught the ball would run to the other side, and if he hit someone with the ball, the hit player would join his former opponents, and so on, until one team disappeared.*

*Kick the Wicky was like baseball, except that the players substituted a “wicky,” a section of bicycle tire 12 to 18 inches long, for the ball. The wicky would be set up across two spaced bricks. Then a player would kick the wicky off the bricks, run the bases and try to score as the other team fielded the wicky.*

In spring 1934, John and Elizabeth Novomesky moved from New York City to the old Wasser farm near Warner’s School House with their son, John Jr., who was finishing fourth grade. They had immigrated to New York from Slovakia in 1929, when John Jr. was 4 years old.

*(Sixty-nine years later, John Jr. still would remember coming into New York Harbor on the boat: “People all of a sudden were saying, ‘Socha Slobody!’ ‘Socha Slobody!’ I didn’t know it, but Socha Slobody in Slovak is Statue of Liberty. And there she was, one of the great sights of my life.”)*

### **Miss Schwenk and the flag**

In September 1934, as 21-year-old Mabel Schwenk started her first year as a teacher, she found a grimy American flag, coated with coal soot, tacked up on the front wall of the Warner’s classroom. Appalled, she climbed up on the organ, took down the flag and drove it home to Red Hill in her Model T Ford. She washed the flag and hung it on her clothesline to dry in the late summer breeze. The next day, she brought back the Stars and Stripes and hung it back up, neat and clean.

Miss Schwenk placed a box of petunias at the back of the room, on a sunny window sill facing the road. She set up a little library of books, many of them financed by a bake sale, on a rear bookshelf. Under the classroom clock, she put up a sign: “Time Passes. Will You?”

### **The whistler**

In her first days at the school, Miss Schwenk also met her first young troublemaker. “I had the whole class sing a song together,” Mabel (Schwenk) Swartley recalled 64 years later. “And while we were singing, one boy was whistling.

“The other children seemed to freeze. You could see the fear on their faces because they didn't know what I was going to do. Suddenly, it came to me. I said, ‘Let’s all whistle!’ You should have seen the smiles on their faces. I was surprised how many could whistle.”

The first whistler was Arthur Keyes. Arthur was full of mischief, but he would reform his ways. Years later, he would marry, become a Greyhound bus driver and have two daughters, one a school librarian, the other a school teacher. Miss Schwenk was paid \$90 a month at the beginning of the 1934-35 school year, \$100 monthly by the end of the term.

She would teach at Warner’s for three years. By this time, the classroom had the picture of George Washington on one side, a picture of Abraham Lincoln on the other.

In 1935, student Esther Miller was working at the blackboard when she accidentally leaned into the hot stove, burning her left elbow. In 1936, eighth-grader Arthur Mack formally debated the issues of the day as part of his classroom debate teams. Thirty-three years later, Arthur would be elected mayor of Coopersburg.

### **Horse and sleigh**

In winter 1937, the snow was so deep even automobiles could not get through. On a Sunday, Miss Schwenk’s father took her to the school house in his horse and sleigh to start the stove fire for Monday.

In 1937, sixth-grader John Novomesky studied John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem “Snow Bound” in Miss Schwenk's class. John would go on to study at Harvard University. In 1947, he would graduate with generals-to-be Alexander Haig and Brent Scowcroft from the West Point Military Academy. John joined the Air Force and later worked for IBM.

From 1937 to 1944, Bertha (Erdman) Hunsberger Smith taught at the Warner's School House. In the summer of 1938, a stray Irish setter slipped through a tiny open window into the crawl space under the school. The dog was pregnant, and soon she had at least six puppies.

Children from the Miller farm fed bread to the dogs. They also adopted one of the puppies. But not long after, a farmer from the other side of the school shot and killed the puppies’ mother. He said she was killing his chickens.

That same summer, a woman in her 90s got out of a car at the Miller farm. She said she was a Warner. She told the Millers her father built the Miller farmhouse. The woman probably was Maria (Warner) Miller, 96, of Allentown.

Maria Miller’s appearance probably was related to a Warner’s School and Literary Society reunion, held Sunday, Aug. 28, 1938. For the reunion, Warner’s School House graduates, teachers and their families were invited, first to the school house, then to a picnic at New Goshenhoppen Church Park.

At the reunion, Oliver Derr, who owned a machine shop in East Greenville, was elected president of the Literary Society. Anna (Wasser) Long, wife of Melvin Long on Wasser Road and member of the East Greenville High Class of '29, was elected secretary, succeeding Clinton S. Schoenly of Old Quakertown Road, a mile east of Pennsburg. Schoenly was father of LeRoy, Paul, Herbert, Verna, Alma, Myrtle and Carl Schoenly.

James Taggert, a farmer on Bank Street, was made treasurer. Speaking at the reunion were Jonas Seibert of Glenside; the Rev. H.H. Krauss, pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Red Hill; and the Rev. H. Morris Schofer of Aristes, Columbia County, former Warner's School House teacher.

"The meeting was largely attended," the Town and Country newspaper reported.

Frank Snyder Warner and his teen-age sons, Lawrence and Thomas, were at the reunion, as was Arline Hartman, Larry's future wife. Frank S. Warner, 53, a Lehigh Valley Railroad engineer, was a son of former Warner's student Theodore Warner, who had died in 1921. Many of the guests spoke Pennsylvania German. When the gathering moved from the school to the picnic, someone said, "It'll be Dutch treat."

Lawrence and Thomas Warner remember an old great aunt at the reunion – Maria (Warner) Miller – and she herself spoke mostly Pennsylvania German. Thomas recalls her boasting she would make it to 100 years old. She died the next year.

In the winter of 1943, during a lunch break, students sledged down a humpy hill behind Warner's School House. Eva Nester's sled flew from a bump and crashed into fellow sixth-grader Vivian Albitz, knocking the wind out of Vivian.

### **Mrs. Miller returns**

On Aug. 3, 1944, Warner's teacher Bertha (Erdman) Smith asked for a leave of absence. Lydia (Schmidt) Miller, who had taught at the school from 1920 to 1922, was hired as a substitute. At the time, her older son Charles Harry Miller was a gunner in the Army Air Corps, fighting the Japanese in the Philippines.

On Sept. 20, 1945, after teachers throughout the Upper Hanover District demanded electric lights, the school board paid Longacre Electric Service of Bally \$525 to wire all the schools for lights. In late 1946, second-grader Robert Nester walked into the Warner's School entrance hall to hang up his coat and, not noticing the open trap door, plunged 6 feet into the cellar. He wasn't hurt.

In 1947, the Pennsylvania Legislature declared it would no longer fund any school serving fewer than 30 students. In 1948, the Warner's School House had only 19 or 20 pupils in grades 1-8, so it was closed. Its last teacher was Lydia Miller, 61 years old when her last pupils went home.

### **Bell upside down**

Students remember Mrs. Miller ringing the school bell to call them back from recess and from “dinner,” their lunch break. As a prank in 1947 and 1948, one or two older boys occasionally turned the bell upside down to give the schoolchildren a longer lunch.

While Mrs. Miller was home eating, they would pull the rope just enough to flip the bell. In the bell tower, the counterweight hung down, where the bell was meant to be. When Mrs. Miller returned and pulled the rope, the bell made no sound. The clapper rested silently as the topsy-turvy bell rocked, mouth upward. Mrs. Miller had to get her husband, Charles, to climb up and flip the bell back into place.

In early 1948, mischievous students threw crayons into the hot stove, setting off fumes that drove everyone outdoors.

### **Bicycle and crutches**

Meanwhile, on many days, Robert Walbert gave fellow sixth-grader Carl Schoenly a bicycle ride from Shady Nook to school. Carl had a bad leg. Robert would pedal nearly a mile, Carl on the back, his crutches across the handlebars.

The last Warner’s students were: Ollea Albitz, Verna Albitz, Warren Albitz, Richard Aston, Howard Dutton, Clyde Fox, Gloria Hoffman, Robert Nester, Carl Rotenberger, Elaine Rotenberger, Roger Rotenberger, Shirley Rotenberger, Carl Schoenly, Janice Stoudt, Lee Taylor, Robert Walbert, Roger Wronowski, Warren Wronowski, Yvonne Wronowski and Eugene Ziegler.

### **Warner’s sold in 1948**

On May 15, 1948, the Warner’s School House was sold for \$2,475 at public auction. William S. and Alice Weiss of Niantic, the successful bidders, received the deed July 6, 1948. The Weisses were pupil Richard Aston’s grandparents. The school bell was sold to Louis Schultz of New Berlinville for \$19; Schultz apparently took the bell tower, too. The original school desk sold for \$3 to the Rev. H. Morris Schofer, who was Warner’s teacher from 1890 to 1894.

In 1949, the Rev. Schofer published a book, “The Story of Warner’s,” which is available in the Schwenkfelder Library at the Perkiomen School, Pennsburg. The book includes the minutes of various Upper Hanover School Board meetings and the by-laws of the Warner’s Literary Society to shed light on the school’s history.

### **School becomes a home**

The small brick building that was Warner’s School House has been used as a home since 1948. Victor Duka, a Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. worker from Green Lane, and his wife, Dorothy (Lozowicki) Duka, formerly of Philadelphia, moved into the old school house around 1950.

After renting three or four years, the Dukas bought the house from the Weisses on Sept. 1, 1953, for \$5,500. The Dukas had two children, Don, born in 1952, and Cynthia, born in 1954. Victor Duka died in 1978; Dorothy died in 1997.

At the old school, the Dukas dug out a narrow underground passage through the length of the older part of the building. It reached from the front basement to the rear of the building, where they added a cellar door. The underground passage came out a foot or two left of the chimney.

In 1952, the Upper Perkiomen Joint Schools were organized. The Joint Schools committee represented the school boards of the Upper Hanover Township, East Greenville, Pennsburg, Red Hill, Green Lane, Sumneytown (Marlborough Township) and Hereford Township districts. The Joint Schools built the Hereford Elementary School, called "the round school" for its circular shape, in 1958, the same year the Perkiomen Creek was dammed up to create the Green Lane Reservoir in Upper Hanover.

In 1966, voters approved the formation of the Upper Perkiomen School District, under one school board. The new district built the Upper Perkiomen High School in 1968 and converted the old high school in East Greenville into the Upper Perkiomen Middle School. The Marlborough Elementary School would be added in 1990.

Now pupils in kindergarten through fourth grade would go to the Hereford and Marlborough elementary schools, and fifth- through eighth-graders would go to the middle school.

Lydia Miller, the Warner School's last teacher, died March 13, 1967, fifty years to the month after she

arrived in Upper Hanover. She was 80. Her husband, Charles, died Aug. 27, 1980. He was 93.

The old Warner's School House was gutted by fire Jan. 17, 1980, but repaired. However, the original two wooden posts to the front porch disappeared during reconstruction.

### **Upper floor added**

In 1993, Dorothy Duka transferred the house to her daughter, Cynthia Dorothy Duka. The next year, Cynthia installed an upper floor in the house, with dormer windows in the roof and a second-floor door cut into the front wall, where the small upper window had been. The new doorway led to an outdoor wooden staircase.

In 2000, Charles Harry Miller, son of Charles Louis Miller and Lydia (Schmidt) Miller, lived with his wife, Mary E. (Gaugler) Miller, in a house next to the old Warner farmhouse. They rented out the farmhouse, which has a 2226 Warner School Road address.

Charles H. and Mary E. Miller were the majority owners of the old Warner farm. Gary Miller, their son and neighbor, was part owner of the Miller farm.

The old school house is at 2207 Warner School Road, East Greenville 18041. Outside the building are a garage, dating to around 1950, and a swimming pool, added in the mid 1990s. A diving board at the pool is about where the school's outhouses used to be. And close to the house, where the water pump once stood, a

well pipe sticks up about a foot, shut off and crowned with a sundial.

Around the front door, etched into the bricks are hundreds of initials of students from long ago. Most of the letters are too faint to read.

In 2000, Larry Warner, grandson of Theodore Warner, lived in Topton, Berks County, with his wife, Arline. Thomas Warner, another grandson, lived in Stowe, Montgomery County, with his wife, Georgiana. (Georgiana Warner died in 2003.) Both Larry and Thomas had children and grandchildren of their own in Pennsylvania and other parts of the eastern United States.

In the Upper Perkiomen School District, 560 pupils in kindergarten through fourth grade were learning at Hereford Elementary School, with its 25 classrooms. The Marlborough Elementary School was teaching another 725 K-4 pupils, in 32 classrooms. In grades 5-8, the district had 1,100 students at the Upper Perkiomen Middle School, which has 44 classrooms.

Warner's School House closed more than a half century ago. Its classes are over, its blackboards long gone. And yet the lessons learned by Warner's students live on in significant, if subtle, ways.

Generation to generation, the old school echoes in our culture, in our love of learning and in our joy at seeing a child open a good book to read. In spirit, the Warner's School House remains in session. Its teachers still teach; its bell still rings.

Whenever its best traditions find their way into a classroom, the littlest red school house of Upper Hanover Township again inspires "the hope and promise of a new spring and a new life."

\* \* \*

**Frank Warner**  
565 Kline Avenue  
Pottstown, Pa. 19465  
(610) 326-8472

**Warner's School House teachers**  
(at beginning of school term)

1856 Amos Krauss, later of Quakertown  
1857 John K. Houck  
1858 Daniel K. Kepner  
1859 John K. Houck  
1860 Benjamin F. Dotts  
1861 M.S. Keel  
1862 Oswin F. "Fred" Waage  
1863 Oswin F. Waage  
1864 Henry Bobb Jr.  
1865 Not available  
1866 N.A.  
1867 John W. Stauffer  
1868 N.A.  
1869 John G. Hersch, later an East Greenville doctor  
1870 John G. Hersch  
1871 John J. Troxel  
1872 Henry J. Smith, part-owner of Warner farm 9 years  
1873 Madison Schwenk  
1874 N.A.  
1875 N.A.  
1876 N.A.  
1877 N.A.  
1878 W.K. Heinly, later elected district justice.  
1879 W.K. Heinly  
1880 F.M. Moll, owner of East Greenville general store.  
1881 William F. Butterweck, later of Red Hill  
1882 John P. Kline, later a Red Hill cigar factory partner

1883 John P. Kline  
1884 Frank Y. Hoffman of East Greenville  
1885 Frank Y. Hoffman  
1886 Frank Y. Hoffman  
1887 Frank Y. Hoffman  
1888 Alice L. Welker  
1889 Jerome Bowman  
1890 H. Morris Schofer  
1891 H. Morris Schofer  
1892 H. Morris Schofer  
1893 H. Morris Schofer  
1894 Dan K. Dotterer  
1895 Dan K. Dotterer  
1896 Dan K. Dotterer  
1897 Dan K. Dotterer  
1898 Dan K. Dotterer  
1899 Dan K. Dotterer  
1900 Daisy Gehman, later missionary to China  
1901 Daisy Gehman  
1902 Mamie C. Hillegass of Pennsburg  
1903 Mamie C. Hillegass  
1904 William Z. Grubb  
1905 William H. Garlach  
1906 E. Young  
1907 Osborne F. Young  
1908 Osborne F. Young  
1909 Carrie Lehman  
1910 Osborne F. Young  
1911 Osborne F. Young  
1912 Osborne F. Young  
1913 Mabel Miller  
1914 Mabel Miller  
1915 Edith Erb  
1916 Edith Erb

1917 Meriem Ott  
1918 Marie Ott  
1919 Mabel Hunsicker  
1920 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1921 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1922 Louis Upholtzer  
1923 Beta Saylor  
1924 Dan K. Dotterer  
1925 Dan K. Dotterer  
1926 Dan K. Dotterer  
1927 Helen Browning  
1928 Elmeda Hoffman  
1929 Sarah (Kurtz) Acker  
1930 Sarah (Kurtz) Acker  
1931 Paul Bitting  
1932 Paul Bitting  
1933 Paul Bitting  
1934 Mabel Schwenk  
1935 Mabel Schwenk  
1936 Mabel Schwenk  
1937 Bertha (Erdman) Hunsberger  
1938 Bertha (Erdman) Hunsberger  
1939 Bertha (Erdman) Hunsberger  
1940 Bertha (Erdman) Smith  
1941 Bertha (Erdman) Smith  
1942 Bertha (Erdman) Smith  
1943 Bertha (Erdman) Smith  
1944 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1945 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1946 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1947 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller  
1948 Lydia (Schmidt) Miller

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