



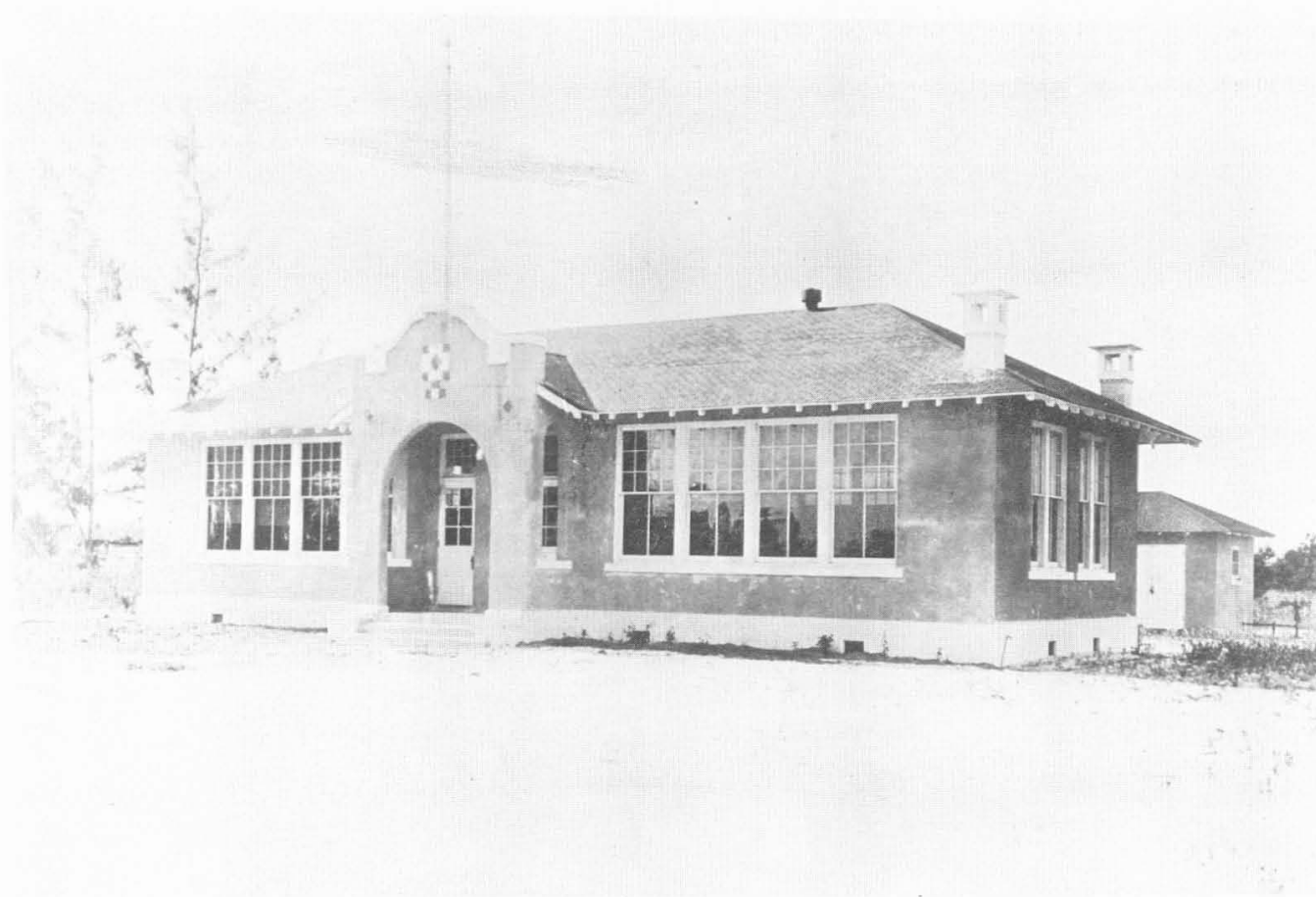
THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

By Joanna Wanzenberg

Vivid recollections of former students and persistent search into old records have brought the history of Deerfield Beach's Old School House alive for her citizens. Restoration of the old school was accomplished by the Deerfield Beach Bicentennial Commission by designating it "Horizon Project." The Old School House is now under the administration of the Deerfield Beach Historical Society.

Joanna Dietrich Wanzenberg is a trustee of the Deerfield Beach Historical Society and, with Mrs. Mary Mowry, is responsible for the restoration of the Old School House. For her work, she will be honored at PIONEER DAYS 1977.

The Old School House was not the city's first school. Deerfield was located in Palm Beach



Above, the Old School House as it appeared in 1920. Below, the school today.



County in 1915 when a wooden frame building served as a school house. This building was leased from the county and returned to it when construction of Deerfield School was completed. The wooden school was in use until 1920 and was located on the southwest corner of Hillsboro Boulevard and 2nd Avenue.

In 1918 the Board of Public Instruction of Broward County added a room to the existing one room school building. Bids were taken several times before the board and trustees accepted a plan for a one-story, high-ceilinged building to be constructed on a cost plus basis under the direction of building superintendent Edgar S. Tubbs. Construction funding was provided by a bond issue of \$12,000. The election failed on first presentation for lack of any votes. It finally passed with nine freeholders casting votes.

In 1920 the Broward County Board of Public Instruction constructed a two room masonry building roofed with asphalt shingles for use as Deerfield's school. The land on which it is situated was surveyed on March 10, 1913 by the Deerfield Development and Land Company — Block 5, lots 1-11. This survey was recorded in Palm Beach County on May 22, 1913, by George O. Butler, Clerk of the Circuit Court. (Deerfield was in Palm Beach County from 1909-1915. Prior to this it was included in Dade County.)

The school was located in the center of Deerfield at that time. The Baptist Church, a frame building which was standing behind what is now Kraeer's Funeral Home, was a landmark in old Deerfield. The building in which Deerfield Furniture was located, near the railroad tracks and Hillsboro Boulevard, housed several small businesses. A small nearby park provided a watering trough and park benches. Railroad section houses were located along the railroad tracks. Many students' homes were near enough to school to enable them to walk to class.

Jay Arnau, who attended Deerfield School in 1924 and 1925, drove his father's Chevrolet to school from his home on the beach. In those days there were no restrictions on age limits for drivers and Mr. Arnau made the trip over the wooden truss bridge which was hand-turned by the bridge tender, Mr. Pagett.

The exterior and interior of Deerfield School was painted a pink-beige color. The landscaping, according to Mr. Arnau, consisted mainly of sand, scrub, and a few trees. The original bathrooms still remain on the south side of the school house. The toilets in use in the 1920s were the high tank variety.

The polished wood floors of the school room

have been restored, and the blackboard hangs in the original frame. The original glass windows are characterized by their "wavy" appearance. Light is provided by three bare bulbs on wire hanging from the ceiling.

Pictures of George Washington, Betsy Ross, and World War One heroes hang from a high picture molding on the wall. A roll top map case and a framed map of the world show boundaries of countries as they were in the 1920s. The upright piano was owned by Mrs. J.D. Butler, whose husband was once mayor of Deerfield.

The children's desks are wood and wrought iron and are situated in rows in front of the teacher's wooden desk. On display are cases of books and educational materials used in the early 1920s. Toys and mementoes are also on exhibit.

Most school equipment was provided by the county and consisted of pads of paper, pencils, ink wells, and pens. An interesting selection of books has been compiled; among those are several that were used in the Broward County School system of this era.

School hours in the Old School House were 8 A.M. to 3 P.M.. Discipline during those hours was maintained easily with the help of rulers, paddles, and even a rubber hose. If a spanking was administered at school it was sure to be followed by a spanking at home.

School was called to order by a large hand-tolled bell located outside the school. The day was begun with opening exercises. At that time the folding partition dividing the two rooms was opened and the two classes met together. There were devotions and singing of such songs as "Auld Lang Syne" and "America."

The upper grades met in one room and the lower grades in the other. Edna Horne Johnson remembers teaching methods that resemble the "open concept of education" used in some schools today. The teacher would, for example, call for the seventh grade arithmetic students who would go up to the teacher's desk for instruction and then return to their own desks to work.

Recess is also recalled by Mrs. Johnson. "When we played jump-rope, the boys would hold the heavy rope and we girls would jump."

Most children in Deerfield walked home for lunch. Jay Arnau tells of an honor system whereby a student was required to "keep his nose clean" in order to leave the school grounds for the noon break. This code consisted of maintaining good grades and good behavior. Mr. Arnau qualified and drove his Chevrolet back and forth for lunch.

"Graduation from eighth grade was a big event," says Mrs. Johnson. Each graduate wrote an essay and delivered it orally on graduation day.



Some Deerfield students and their teacher, Miss Bessie Liddy, were on their way to the beach when this photograph was taken in the 1920s.

Mrs. Johnson remembers how her father urged her to practice her essay on all visiting friends and relatives.

Upon entering ninth grade, students from Deerfield had to travel to Fort Lauderdale High School by bus. Mrs. Johnson reported that on occasional cold mornings the students would arrive at Fort Lauderdale High School only to find that school had been cancelled due to the weather. On the bus trip home, plans were made for a picnic on the Deerfield Beach. By the time they had reached home, the sun had warmed the day, and the students were off on their picnic.

Skinny dipping

One particular bus trip is vividly remembered by Mr. Arnau. He and his schoolmates were on the way to school along A1A when the bus trip was interrupted by a flat tire. The bus driver, Leslie Scott, had to walk to Pompano for help. The boys then decided to take advantage of the situation by stripping and taking a swim in the ocean. The girls waited until they were out of sight and then tied all the boys' clothes in knots.

Mrs. Johnson recalls that the County School Superintendent at that time was James S. Rickards who would come to Deerfield School several times a year to observe the classes.

In 1925 enrollment at Deerfield School was increasing. Margaret Johnson Johnson began first grade in the Baptist Church because of the crowded condition of the school house. Shortly after, a wooden building, much like the wooden "portables" used in schools today, was added to the original school. Mrs. Haddie Banks taught the first and second grade students in this addition. The children were seated on small chairs around several tables.

The land and the building known then as Deerfield School were traded by the Broward County Board of Public Instruction to the city of Deerfield Beach in exchange for the land on which the existing Deerfield Beach Elementary School was built. First used in 1926, Deerfield Beach Elementary is one of the oldest schools in Broward County still utilized today.

The city of Deerfield Beach was then in possession of the Old School House. In 1925 a jail-house was added and the building became the City Hall. It became a gathering place for the town's citizens; every Saturday night square dances were held there.

When the new Deerfield Beach City Hall was built, the Old School House building became the City Building Department. More recently it was utilized as a woodworking shop for the City Maintenance Department.

Today, the Old School House is not only a museum and replica of a 1920s school house, it is also equipped with a modern meeting room available for use by community groups.

We, the committee for the restoration of the Old School House, are grateful not only to the Bicentennial Commission and the Historical Society of Deerfield Beach, but also to the many interested individuals and groups who helped make this contribution to our community a reality.

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