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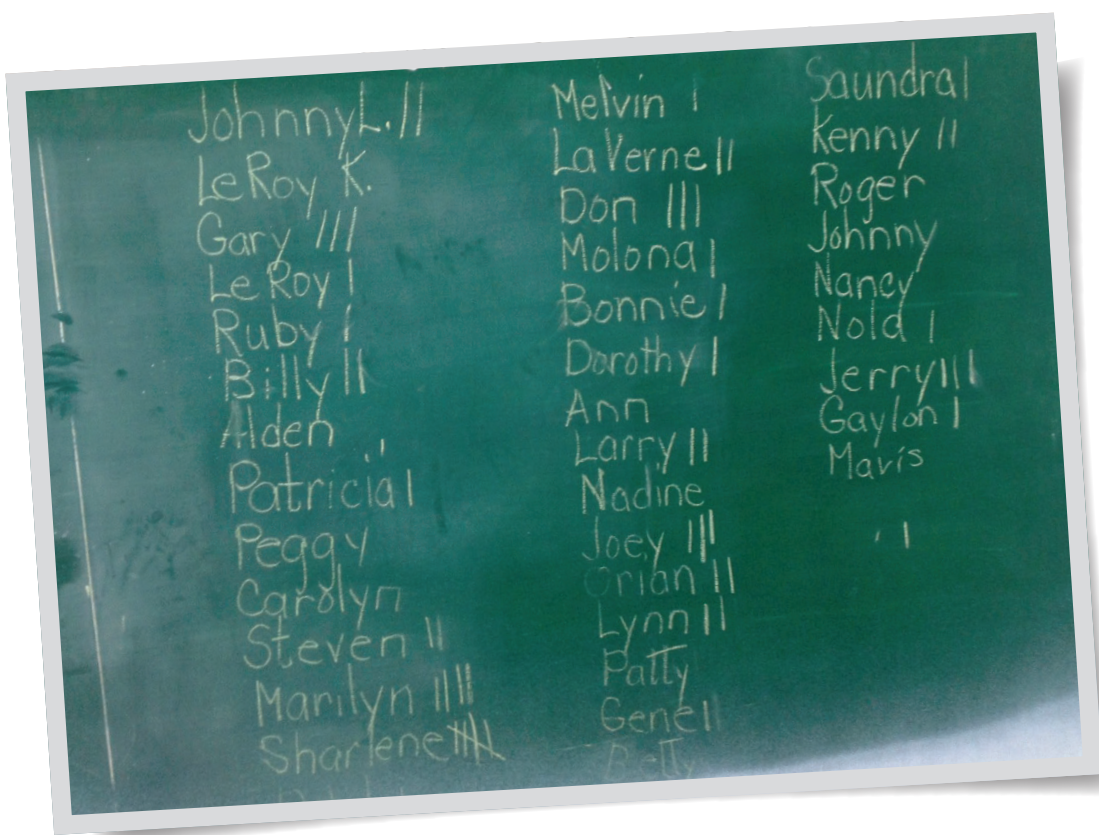
The Community Page

AUGUST 11, 2013

DISCOVERIES AT THE NEW SWEDEN SCHOOL

The New Sweden School was built in 1927. It served the community well for 52 years until 1979. It sat vacant for the next 34 years and was severely vandalized over those years. Last year the school was purchased by Frank and Belinda VanderSloot and is currently being totally refurbished by the VanderSloot Foundation. It will become the home of the new American Heritage Charter School and will open next month. The plan has been to save as much of the old school as possible and to restore everything that can be restored. Hundreds of people who attended New Sweden School during its heyday still live in the community.

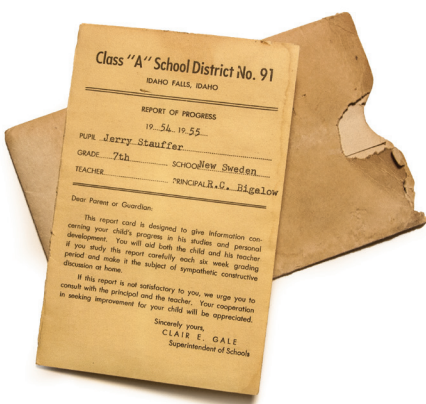
Several fun and interesting discoveries have been made during the remodel of the New Sweden School. Today's Community Page features a few of those.



The Chalkboard

If walls could talk they might share the story about how these students earned marks next to their names on an old chalkboard that was discovered at the school. To make way for new whiteboards that will be installed in the classrooms, workers removed the old black slate chalkboards only to find green chalkboards underneath them that had evidently been used prior to the black slate boards being installed. One of the original green chalkboards still had a list of student names with numerous marks next to them as if a tally were being made next to the names. The names in white chalk on the green chalkboard were perfectly preserved as if it had been written on minutes before. Organizers are working to see if there is some way to preserve the chalkboard and the names in a way that will not interfere with the new whiteboard that will be installed over the top of the old chalkboard.

NOW THE RIDDLE: Who were these students? They are likely to still be alive today. There are some unique names like Molona, Sandra, Melvin, Nadine, Nola and Mavis. It would be interesting to learn what year they attended New Sweden and what memories they might have of the school. If anyone has information regarding who these students might have been, they can call (208) 313-2679 or (208) 528-2011.



The Report Card

During renovation, a report card from 1954 was found on the top shelf in a coat closet at the school. Evidently it has been resting there out of sight for almost 60 years. The card belonged to Jerry Stauffer who was in the seventh grade at the time it was lost. Apparently the card was misplaced in the middle of the 1954 school year because Jerry's parents had signed the card for the first two "semesters" of the year but the last two "semesters" were lacking their signature. The grades were pretty good so it is doubtful that Jerry misplaced it on purpose. 😊 Jerry would be approximately 73 years old today. Although Jerry has probably not been worrying about what happened to his report card for all these years, we would like to return Jerry's report card to him, if possible, at the school open house on Thursday, August 29.



The Brick

The restoration team needed to replace the mortar on the old chimney and planned to reuse the original bricks. But there's one brick that won't be joining the others. As the mason began tearing down the top three feet of the chimney stack, he noticed a brick just one foot above the roofline that had etchings on it and pulled it out. The brick has the name "Benson Dowd" carved in it, with the date "Aug. 3, 1927," which would have been just weeks before the school opened. We believe Benson's real name was Jarvis Benson Dowd, but he went by Benson. He was just 17 years old, beginning his career as a brick mason when he inscribed his name on the brick that he installed on the New Sweden School chimney. Benson later enlisted in the U.S. Army on February 18, 1943. He was a paratrooper. He died in Normandy, France on December 8, 1944, shortly after the invasion of Normandy. The brick will become a part of the school's Museum along with other artifacts discovered during the renovation.



Update on the Missing School Bell

The Foundation would like to thank the community for responding with information about the bell that used to hang at the New Sweden School. We are busy following up on all the leads that have been called in. The search has become an exciting venture. Anyone with additional information, please call (208) 528-2011.

OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, August 29, 5-9 p.m.

In 1927, the New Sweden community celebrated the opening of the school by serving ice cream and cake in the basement of the new school. Eighty-four years later, organizers plan to celebrate the school's restoration and reopening in the same manner. The VanderSloot Foundation and the American Heritage Charter School invite the public to come enjoy ice cream and cake at an open house on Thursday, August 29, 2013 from 5-9 p.m. Tour the refurbished school and support the students by participating in the silent auction. Supporters can also buy some of the original windows, chalkboards, and other mementos recovered during the renovation. Join the community for a special capstone ceremony where a bell will be hung once again in the old bell tower.