CC4442 10.23.26 Friday [upload and attach picture]

School patrons in Hamilton Local School District, a couple miles south of Columbus, are in the process of moving a one-room schoolhouse from the intersection of U.S. Route 23 and Rathmell Road to a site next to Hamilton Elementary School near Rathmell Road and Parsons Ave.

This venture is of interest to me for two reasons: I am a devoted fan of the great American public school system, symbolized by the one-room school building, and my late father-in-law attended this one-room school building.

A Columbus Dispatch article provides some details about this move.

One-room schools, particularly in rural America, are symbols and a reminder of public policy of universal public education. Our forefathers and mothers understood the nexus between democracy and public schooling. Public schooling was established as a township-based institution with a primary purpose of perpetuating the democratic way of life.

The Hamilton Township old schoolhouse 10, also known as the Hartman School, is on dollies as it is being prepared to be moved to a site next to Hamilton Elementary School on the Hamilton Local School District campus. The building was constructed in the late 1800s and served as a school until the 1920s. Cole Behrens/Columbus Dispatch

A 19th century Columbus-area schoolhouse is going places. Literally.

A group of concerned citizens has raised money to move the late 1800s Hamilton Township Schoolhouse 10 – also known as the Hartman School – just over a mile from its current location at the intersection of U.S. 23/South High Street and Rathmell Road, just south of Interstate 270 and the Great Southern Shopping Center, to a site next to Hamilton Elementary School on the Hamilton Local School District campus near Rathmell Road and Parsons Avenue.

On Sept. 30, building movers from Zanesville-based Dingey Movers had raised the school off its foundation and placed it atop motorized dollies parked on another spot on the plot.

Walley Obert, a Hamilton Local Schools board member, said the schoolhouse will be moved along Rathmell Road to the site by the current elementary school at a later date in the near future, after permits and road closures have been cleared for the move.

Obert is among those who helped lead the charge via a foundation to preserve the building, an effort that has been underway for a dozen years. The plan is to move it to the elementary school and convert it to a museum highlighting how education looked in the one-room schoolhouse era.

'You never really stop learning about your roots,' Obert said. 'We're really proud of the South Side, and we had something that we could save – and we know people that their grandparents went to school here.'

From the early 1800s to the mid-20th century, rural America was dotted with one-room schoolhouses until the rise of busing and multi-room school buildings rendered them largely obsolete. In 1919, there were more than 190,000 one-room schoolhouses in operation, according to Forbes. As of 2020, there were just 400.

The brick building is the last remaining building on the Hartman Farm property, which covered 5,000 acres at its peak and was called the 'largest functioning farm' at the time. The exact construction date of the Hartman schoolhouse is unknown, but it was constructed for $1,250 in the late 1800s, and the building served as a school until 1925.

It was later converted to a private residence, but Obert said the internal changes were superficial and can be easily removed when it is turned into an educational museum. The building was at risk of demolition because a RaceTrac gas station is set to be built on the property.

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RaceTrac and Google, which is constructing a data center near the site, were among the contributors to the foundation funding the relocation of the school. No school funding or taxpayer money is being used in the move or renovation.

Obert said the foundation behind the move was inspired by other school districts preserving their old schoolhouses as museums and learning opportunities, like one-room schoolhouses relocated by Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools and by Johnstown-Monroe Local Schools.

'With all this development around here, this will be the only thing from the past,' Obert said.

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