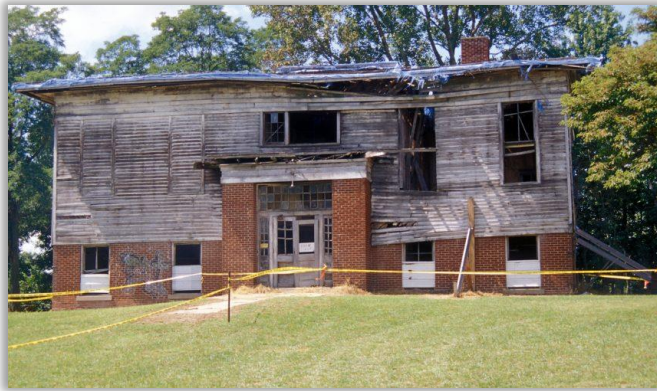


Seeing “Old School” Value

By Toni Lynn Giffin, Lead Regulatory Reviewer, Historic Structures
Indiana DNR Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology

The framers of the Northwest Ordinance of 1785 included a radical statement in their document: “religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” Although applied unequally to the states’ minorities, Hoosiers developed a substantial free public school system that was thriving by the 1870s. If you know where to look, you can explore many surviving historic schoolhouses throughout the state (Diebold 1998).

In the late 1830s a freed African American married couple from Tennessee took the chance to move north to a southwestern portion of Indiana, which would later be named Lyles Station (Gibson County), incorporated in 1886. It was one of the first African American communities in Indiana and still has an active population today. In 1919, the community established a common public school for their children, Lyles Consolidated School. The school remained open until 1958 and had fallen into disrepair when the Lyles Station Historic Preservation Corporation (LSHPC) acquired the property and began to restore it with the thought of turning it into a museum and heritage center. The LSHPC applied for and received funding for the building restoration via grants and special preservation loans. The building opened in 2003 as a living history museum, complete with a classroom. It also serves as a community center (Lyles Station: About Us: <https://lylesstation.org/about-us/>).



Lyles Consolidated School circa 1999 - Indiana Landmarks



Lyles Consolidated School circa – 2003 Indiana Landmarks

Indiana has other historic schoolhouses that have been preserved. Visitors can time travel to the late 1800s and immerse themselves in a hands-on experience of how it was to attend school during that era. Some of these examples include:

- The **Pittsboro One Room School** in Pittsboro, Indiana (Hendricks County) visithendrickscounty.com/listings/pittsboro-1883-one-room-school/293/
- The **Simmons School** in Hope, Indiana (Bartholomew County) simmonsschool.com/
- **Martin Schoolhouse** in Carroll County, Indiana carrollcountyindiana.com/visit/historic-places/martin-schoolhouse

There are other historic schoolhouses in Indiana that have been preserved through adaptive reuse as homes, community centers, and businesses. Some examples include:

- The **Old Wilbur Schoolhouse** in Martinsville, Indiana (Morgan County) morgancountyparks.org/parks/the-old-wilbur-schoolhouse-c1876/
- The **Morris School** in West Lafayette, Indiana (Tippecanoe County) wlpfoundation.org/projects/cason-family-park
- The **Schoolhouse 7** Café in Fishers, Indiana (Hamilton County) schoolhouse7cafe.com/history



Flatrock School #9 - Indiana Landmarks 2023

If you are looking for a unique opportunity to save a slice of Indiana history, Indiana Landmarks is working with the current owner of the Flatrock School #9 in New Salisbury, Indiana (Harrison County) in offering the building (only) for sale (indianalandmarks.org/for-sale/flatwood-school-9/). There is a rich history regarding the building: it was built in c. 1890 and the descendants of one of the original teachers still own the property. The desire of Indiana Landmarks and the current owner is to keep the building within Harrison County.

Has your passion for preserving the early educational system in America been ignited? If so, you can learn about the Country School Association of America, a non-profit organization dedicated “to preserving memories of country schools and promoting scholarship about the early American educational experience.” To learn of their focus on “old school” value, visit countryschoolassociation.org.

References

Diebold, Paul C.

1998 Indiana’s Public Common and High Schools Multiple Property Documentation Form. Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indianapolis, Indiana.