

When visitors step through the front door of the Brickyard School Museum, memories swirl as they recall their country school days. A father holding the hands of his young children might be overheard saying "This is where I went to school". They look around at the scene before them of another era. A pot belly stove, a bubbler type cooler, kerosene lamps, American flags, pictures of presidents and maps of far off lands embellish the walls.

The Brickyard School was built in 1905 near the Boettcher and Meyer Brickyards, which were two miles east of Merrill on Highway 64. The school served Town of Scott students within a two mile radius. In 1962, when rural schools like the Brickyard closed, the Wisconsin Fair Board urged local fair associations to preserve at least one country school and bring it to their fairgrounds. Lincoln County 4-H Free Fair Board responded and saved the Brickyard School. Picked because it was nearest to the Fairgrounds and located on a highway.

After being relocated to the Lincoln County Fairgrounds, the school was used by various groups for special displays over the next 20 years. In 1982, the newly founded Merrill Historical Society approached the Fair Board about the possibility of operating the building as a school museum. An agreement was drawn up where the Fair Board would retain ownership and outside maintenance of the building. The Merrill Historical Society would accept responsibility for the interior maintenance and inventory of school items in the building. It was agreed that we would have a historical exhibit on display during the annual county fairs.

Since we became involved in 1982, under the guidance and leadership of Myrtle Natzke, Lorraine Muschinske and Frederick Schepp, along with many retired teachers, the importance of this museum has grown and become a part of the Merrill Community. Many country school items have been found to return this building back to the representation of a country school. The Brickyard School Museum has become a center of knowledge for all 86 Lincoln County country schools. Huge loose leaf notebooks now document the teachers and students. School class pictures are being collected and documented. A milestone was reached in 2002 when pictures of 84 of the 86 recorded schools are now on display at the Brickyard School Museum. Every year at the Fair in July, the Museum is open and staffed with many of the retired one room school house teachers. They share their rich history and the importance these schools played in the beginning of Merrill and the foundation of our education system.

Through cooperation with the Merrill Area public and parochial schools, since 2000, the Historical Society has sponsored a Brickyard School Days event. Every Fall over a 2 week period, every first grade has a half day at the Brickyard School and goes back in time to the days before computers and calculators.

The Merrill Historical Society is proud to be able to display this piece of Merrill Community history. We hope you will take a moment to stop in and see us at the Fair.