



Purdy School

Oiled hardwood floors, the creaking lids of wooden desks, and the smell of chalk dust in the air bring the Purdy School to life when children's voices are added. By the fall of 2010, over 8,000 students had experienced a day at Purdy School on the John A. Logan College campus. Purdy School served as a one-room public school in southern Perry County, Illinois from around 1860 until 1951.

Edwin Burbank, the great-grandfather of Mrs. Harold Rice, donated the land on which the school house was originally built to the county, and four generations of Mrs. Rice's family attended there. According to tradition, the school's name came from Mr. E. P. Purdy who helped initiate Sunday schools in the area and used the school for music and Sunday school classes.

In the 1950s, classes at Purdy School ended due to an increasing population and the county consolidation of schools. The building continued to be used as a polling place and community center until 1981 when it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Rice. The Rices made the school a gift to the John A. Logan College Foundation for its use as a museum that represents early public education in southern Illinois.

The school building was moved to the campus on September 16, 1983, through the generosity of the Julia Harrison Bruce Foundation. The school was dedicated on November 6, 1983, in a ceremony attended by many educators and others who attended or taught in one-room schools. Since that time, the building has been repaired and volunteers have collected artifacts to recreate the one-room school.

In 1989, Williamson County celebrated its Sesquicentennial and "A Salute to 150 Years of Education" was held at Purdy School, including tours, exhibits, demonstrations and other activities that related to the era of the one-room school. Since spring 1993, the Purdy School Foundation has been assisting the College museum staff in the planning and implementation of ongoing activities at the Purdy School.

Today, Purdy School serves to demonstrate to public school students a turn-of-the-century school setting, and local retired school teachers serve as teacher guides for the experience. The one-room school atmosphere has been restored with vintage textbooks, slates and chalk, a recitation bench, a pot-bellied stove, and recess games that reflect an earlier time. Annual fall and spring one-day sessions are held for students from throughout southern Illinois.

Area retired educators who regularly participate in the Purdy School experience are Sarah Geiselman, Shirley Hayes, Bob Jackson, Karla McCamish, Rosemary Mathis, Betty Neely, Gene and Maxine Snider, and Sue Tresnak.