



School Desks - 1996.034.001



These Globe Furniture Co. double-desks are from the Balsam School in Hagerman Township. Balsam School opened in 1874, fittingly situated in a grove of balsam trees, on a half-acre of land donated by George Manson. According to John Macfie in *From Parry Sound Old Times*, it was both an honour and convenience for one's children to provide land for a settlement's first school. Like most schoolhouses of the time, it also served as the community hall and church.

A fire destroyed the school in 1906 and it was replaced with a larger frame building. While the maker's marks on the desks are dated "Nov. 23 1888" prior to the fire, our research suggests they were used in the new building. Improvements to the one-room schoolhouse occurred over time, including the addition of factory-made desks, an organ for the church and real slate blackboards to replace the old painted walls.

In the 1940s, Public School inspector Peter Scott requested each of the district's teachers organize a history of their school. In 1942, teacher Iva White compiled a history of Balsam School with help from the local community. Much of what we know about the school today originates from her work.

Balsam was closed in 1947, due to declining enrollment, and children were sent to Sunnyslope School on the corner of the Great North and Balsam Roads. At the time of its closure, the building was saved from destruction by a local deer-hunting club. Balsam School was one of many one-room schoolhouses in the West Parry Sound District and while many are now gone, the remaining objects will tell their stories.