

EARLY SUBSCRIPTION AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS

The early schools, people attending and information concerning them is fast disappearing from today's scene. A retired school teacher and I decided to do something about it. We collected old pictures of these schools, no longer standing, and took pictures of these ^{that} ~~that~~ were. We learned the names, District number, location, history and stories about the 167 schools in Kosciusko County, Indiana with its 17 townships. This material was given to our Kosciusko County Historical Society. With the things I learned working on this project, plus what I remember about attending a Dis. school all eight grades, will be told in this article.

The first schools were made of logs. They were heated with a fireplace, with greased paper windows and had a dirt floor. One incident tells of school being held at a meeting house built of logs by older boys, who also furnished fire wood to keep them warm. Someone who had a little learnin' (not a licensed teacher) taught them to read, write ^{and} ~~and~~ simple arithmetic and spell. They sat on logs around the fire and no money was charged for anything. Anyone wanting to learn could come.

Sometimes meetings were held in a home used as a school. One lady taught several Indians and whites alike. A small fee was paid by each pupil to the teacher..

All the schools in the county from 1836 - 1853 were subscription schools maintained by people in the community. Teachers pay ranged from 5 to 15 dollars a month.

law

In 1852 a ~~law~~ was passed making schools public problems to be maintained by taxation and they were now called "free" schools. Around 1866 small, one room frame buildings came into being. There might be only 8 to 10 pupils attending some of these schools. These frame buildings had glass windows and home made desks with backs. The blackboard consisted of boards painted black on the front side.

In 1880 - 1900 these buildings gave way to brick instead of frame. They were not much better but did have better equipment. This one room had a chimney for the stove and at the entrance was a small room for wraps and shelves to hold dinner pails. Since there was no heat here your dinner might take some thawing out, around the stove, at noon.

Shelves, or a recessed cupboard, held books that made up the school library. There were desks for about 30 students but at times there were 50 to 60 pupils for one teacher to cope with. On the teachers desk or table was a globe, maps and books. A ruler, knife, to sharpen broken lead pencils, and the teachers bell which she rang at the beginning of a school day, were also there.

The teacher stayed at one of the ~~parsons~~, paying for room and board, if distance from her home was too far to drive. It was the custom for teachers to visit the homes of their pupils staying overnight getting acquainted with their parents.

In about 1906 District Schools were built with more than oneroom and using more than one teacher. These were usually located in small villages and towns.

There was no distinction as to the age of pupils in grammar (or chart classes) a little boy of $5\frac{1}{2}$ years might be seated by a young giant 23 yrs old who was also learning to spell such jawbreakers as MAN, FLY, and BIRD, and to do such complicated sums in arithmetic as 3 from 6 leaves 3. These schools were often reached by going through the woods -no roads- just paths, and you battled the elements of snow, sleet or rain as you traveled over the rough, rustic countryside, sometimes in darkness and fog.

Some of the duties of the teacher consisted of building the fire, ringing the school bell, on a clear day its tones traveled a great distance, and doing the janitor chores. They cleaned the blackboards and erasers, swept the floors, dusted the desks the teachers table and sometimes washed the windows. The teacher often had to "bundle up" small children for their walk home. Those 3 or 4 buckle articles were hard to get on over the shoes.

Quite a number of teachers were very stern disciplinarians. One teacher would walk about the room with a stick, about 4 ft. long, under his arm and suddenly without warning whack some chap with brutal force. The pupils didn't know why he was being hit, he hadn't done anything but the teacher said, "those boys can never be whipped amiss, and it has a good effect on the rest of the school." This was the teacher's reply when a visitor at school protested his actions.

Another teacher punished a boy by catching him by his coat collar, jerking him across the room then opened the school door kicked the boy on the seat of his pants, with great force, landing him out in the school yard.

Also in the stern chastisement department was a one armed man who could hand out punishment with the best of them. He would go to the woods get a hickory stick, always selecting ones that left the greatest sting, and use it with great vigor on the culprit.

On the first day of school the teacher posted their penal code upon the wall, as follows:

For whispering-----	2	stripes
" leaving the room with permission	3	"
" laughing out loud-----	4	"
" swearing or vulgar words-----	5	"
" throwing paper wads-----	6	"
" lying-----	7	"
" fighting-----	8	"

Schools were usually named after the people who owned the land where the school was built, names like Welch, Cattel, Jennings, Tucker, Black, etc. The land was deeded to the school as long as it was used for a school, after that, it went back to the land owners. Many schools had queer names however such as--- "Frog Pond" so called because the school was built on marshy like ground. It is said that frogs were so plentiful around the school in the spring and they croaked so loud that children could scarcely be heard while reciting their lessons, or concentrate on studying.

"Frog Palace" was named this because Frogs held sway around this school also.

"Bloody corners" was given this name because several of the older boys congregating on a corner began to fight. They couldn't be stopped until the ground was covered with blood - therefore the name "Bloody Corners".

"Bone Prairie" was so named because it was an old Indian burial ground and the ground was covered with bones. The Indians did not bury their dead in the ground but put them in pens above ground and left them fall to pieces.

"Eight Square" School was called this because it had eight sides and therefore an oddity.

"Mt. Tabor" School was called "Lickskillet" as was the church that stood close by. The story is told that some people living in that area were very poor and had a large family whom they couldn't afford to feed, therefore they were taken to some neighbor's homes when they were through eating and would eat the leftovers. It was said "they licked the skillet clean."

A few years before the school was abandoned some boys were accused of poisoning the well where the children drank. Nothing was ever done because they could not prove who did it. Some children became quite ill but no one died.

"Happy Corners" was so called because of its Happy surroundings.

"Buzzards Glory". This school was located where Buzzards were around in great numbers.

"Dismal" School. Where this school was located the surroundings had such a dismal look that they called the school "Dismal".

"Shoe Lake School" was sometimes called the "Irish School" because a large family of O'Connell's went to school there and they were Catholic.

"Gripe" - There is no reason given why this school was called "Gripe", but one might form their own opinion.

"Africa" School. It was called "Africa" because several wild boys

attended and it was said, they acted like heathens from Africa.
"Oak Grove" School was nicknamed "Spunkey Hill". A young girl
was going to teach her first term of school. Several large ^{rowdy} ~~boy~~
boys were in the habit of running out the teachers. They said
she wouldn't last a month. At the beginning of the first day of
school, the ringleader of the gang, approached her desk intending
to harm her. As he came near to her she stuck out her foot
tripping him and he fell flat on his face. She said nothing but
went on with her duties and taught the whole year without more
trouble from the gang, therefore the school was called "Spubkey
Hill".

"Jay Bird School" was located in a woods where jay birds were
plentiful - therefore its name.

On the last day of school the teacher usually gave each pupil a Souvenir booklet. These contained a wealth of information because they gave the name of the school, the District number, ~~the~~ teacher's name, names of the pupils, the county Supt., the Trustee, sometimes the Truant Officer's name and date of the Booklet. Inside were beautiful sentimental verses concerning "School Day" and ~~inside~~ ^{in one} we found "The Teacher's Creed" -- as follows:

I believe in boys and girls, the men and women of a great tomorrow; that whatsoever the boy soweth the man shall reap; I believe in the curse of ignorance, the efficacy of schools, in the dignity of teaching and in the joy of serving others.

I believe in Wisdom as revealed in the human lives as well as in pages of a printed book, in lessons taught, not so much by example, but in ability to work with the hands as well as to think with the head, in ~~everything~~ that makes life large and lovely.

I believe in the beauty of the school room, in the home, in daily life and in out-of-doors.

I believe in laughter, in love, in faith, in all ideas and hopes that lure us on.

I believe that every hour of every day we receive a just reward for all we are and all we do.

I believe in the present and its opportunities, in the future and its promises and in the divine joy of living--"

Edward Asgood Grover.

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Also on the last day of school the teacher handed out "Reward of Merit Cards", "Certificates of Honor", "Roll of Honor Certificates in Consideration of Meritorious conduct and Scholarship", which were prized by those receiving them. Report cards were also given out for the 3rd. part of the year.

Dr. Harold H. Negley, Superintendent Department of Public Instruction State of Indiana, made these comments: "The early teachers were certainly the pioneers of the educational field and deserve the credit for being the fore-runners of an educational system that has made our nation the best educated in the world.

Their dedication to the advancement of learning in the face of hardship and lack of supplies serves as an inspiration to those of us in the teaching profession today."

It is with great pleasure therefore that we salute these early schools and their teachers and our thoughts are well expressed in "School Days" by John Greenleaf Whittier. Deserted School by Beulah Fenderson Smith and the Noblest--Desiderius Erasmus 1466-1536.

By Hazel B. Linn