

No Busses, No Electricity, No School Lunch!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to go to school 150 years ago? Some things might remind you of your present school, but most would not.

The earliest schools were heated by fireplaces. Later chunk wood stoves became common. If you happened to sit near the stove, you were probably warm enough, but if your seat was in the back of



SCHOOL IN NORTH CALAIS — 1899

When we were a young state, there were no school systems as we have them today. If you learned to read and do math at all, you would do it at home with your mother or father as teacher. Perhaps the only book you would have to practice reading in would be the Bible.

As more people came into the state, the need grew to have schoolhouses. The first ones were made of logs. Later they were built of lumber and seldom were bigger than one room.

the room, you would be cold most of the time. Wood for the stove was provided by parents or purchased from the person who could supply it for the least money.

Of course there was no electricity and no indoor toilets. Since glass was very expensive, there were few windows. As a result, the classrooms were often quite dark. The outhouse behind the school made for a chilly trip on a cold January day.

Water for the school usually came from a neigh-

bor's well. Everyone who wanted a drink used the same dipper. This practice, plus the danger of bad well water, often resulted in diseases sweeping the school.

In 1861 a school teacher made these entries in her diary:

December 25: Christmas Day. Diphtheria among the scholars, six have it or are sick with it.

December 26: I hope some of the sick ones will get well, only 22 in school. (She had 30 pupils in all.)

December 29: Called on Marilla Hosmer (who died next day).

December 31: Tuesday. Again school is smaller, only 16 today. Another of my scholars has gone to rest. "One after one departs who has not lost a friend." Ellen Miller died this P.M.

Children frequently sat on backless, split-log benches so tall that the feet of the smaller children couldn't reach the floor.



Schoolbooks were very rare and quite expensive. Some families owned only one or two books which were shared by all the family members. Since all the students from beginners through teen-agers were in the same room, such sharing was not as difficult

as you might think.

Some students used slates or copy books to practice on since there was very little paper. Blackboards were first used by a Vermonter. In those days a blackboard was exactly that, an ordinary board that had been painted black.



Ink was made from bark and nuts, and students learned to make pens from goose quills which they had to keep sharpened with a knife. Later steel pens were used. Of course there were no fountain pens or ball point pens in those days, and not many people had lead pencils.

Almost every town had a number of one room schools. Each school would be built in a different neighborhood so that the student would not have too far to go to school. Students usually went to school on foot.

The boys and girls would often carry their lunches to school in tin pails. Lunches were not very fancy. Some pupils might have only cold boiled potatoes while others would have a piece of bread covered with bacon grease. Often pupils would line up their lunch pails near the stove in the winter so that their sandwiches would not freeze.

In the early days there were usually two "terms" of school each year. One was in the summer while the other was in the winter. Usually more students attended winter school than summer because the older boys and girls were needed to help on the farm during the summer months.

Teachers were paid very little, sometimes only a dollar a week. Also they "boarded around." That meant that the teacher might live with the parents of one of her students for a few days, then move on to live with another family. Every family with children in school was expected to provide board and room for the teacher.

Schools usually taught just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Later history, geography, and hygiene were added. Many times, though, a good teacher would make school more interesting by including nature study or by reading to the whole school from an interesting book.

Students had to learn many things by heart. Reciting a story or a poem to the teacher proved that the pupil knew it whether he understood it or not. This kind of memorization is called "learning by rote." Rules and exercises were often recited in unison by the whole class.

A teacher in a one room school with 25 or 30 pupils ranging in age from 5 to 15 had to be very strict or nothing would get done. Often there were boys in the school who were bigger and sometimes even older than the teacher. The discipline was firm and the rules strict. The teacher would frequently use a birch switch or a ruler to enforce the rules. Parents wanted their children to behave in school. If the pupils were switched or spanked in school they were often spanked again when they got home.

How does your school differ from the schools of Vermont's early days? How is it alike? Do you think you can learn more at the school you go to now than you would have had you gone to school 150 years ago?

EDUCATIONAL FIRSTS IN VERMONT



Three tools that are in almost all school classrooms today had their origins in Vermont. The blackboard was first used by Samuel Read Hall who was the founder of the first teacher training school, or normal school. The globe is common in most schoolrooms now but was new when first created by James Wilson of Bradford in 1810. No one is perfect, and even Vermonters make mistakes. As a result the rubber eraser was first used in Bennington by Henry Cushman.

Merit Award given to Emily Allen in 1825 for excellence in school.

Knowledge pursue;
So shall thy mind disclose
Beauties superior to the full blown
rose.



This certifies, that Miss *Emily Allen*
by her amiable deportment and diligence in study, merits the esteem
of her friends, and receives the cordial approbation of

Herbert Pratt
per Instructor

March 5th 1825