

Back to school a mixed blessing in 1915

By Gordon B. Seavey

Interviewed by the EAGLE, a group of students recently gave a variety of excuses why they had no great desire to return to school after the summer vacation

Such as "I'd like to do what I want boring summer is too short can't name one

good thing about school and I don't like school, period "

Brian Depuis, however, reported "Yes, I want to go back to school It gives me something to do "

Grandparents and, in particular, great-grandparents, might agree with Brian

Seventy years ago, after a hot and dusty summer without swimming pools, air conditioners and Kimball's ice cream cones, most of Westford's students were tired of working on the farms Chasing loose animals, pitching hay onto a high wagon with the hayseed itching on sweaty bodies, was no fun It was worse stashing the new-mown hay into the upper recesses of a hot, unventilated barn

Plenty of weeds

Girls, too, were often called to assist in the haying process, or weed the garden, or milk the cows, feed the chickens, in addition to household chores.

Few had bicycles and if so it was not much fun riding along dusty, unpaved roads. There was swimming available at Forge, Burge's and Nab ponds, but the walk coming and going under the late afternoon sun hardly made it worth while

Frank H. Hill was superintendent of schools and set up a point system to encourage home life as well as school work This was in 1915

The program went like this One credit was for building the fire in the morning (what, no automatic heat and electric ranges); one point for milking a cow (no cows today); retiring before 9 p.m. (and miss my favorite TV program!), and sleeping with the window open This was supposed to make better athletes, but there was no soc-

cer, football, tennis, etc., and the Academy had problems fielding nine players on the baseball diamond

And if you curried the family horse (girls today love this stuff) one would get two points Also, the same amount for making biscuits — lead or light.

Then there were three credits for wiping the dishes or having clean hands, face and nails in school (Mothers still have problems on this one) Bathing (no showers) or preparing an entire meal warranted six points.

Who irons today?

And if Amy (there were no Christines, Danielles, Sandras or Kellys in those days) would wash, iron and starch her very own school clothes, a big 20 points. Boys wore knickers and long, black cotton socks, usually with a hole or two in the foot

Putting a buck in the savings bank gave a thrifty person ten points What's a dollar today worth to a kid?

There was the other side, too Ten credits were deducted when school was skipped, or one missed the horse-drawn "barge" driven by George Burke, Jim Wilson, Fred Shugrue, George Kimball and others.

Now, to get back to Brian's point of view He and all you other students now probably find yourselves busy and occupied with many, many school activities, both in the classroom and after studies

Don't tell me, a graduate of the Academy in 1922, that school is boring and summer is all fun! However, I don't remember that the point system was a howling success.

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