

Westford Recollections

Graniteville School No. 10

by Mrs Charles Kennedy

As Graniteville had only two or three houses up until 1855, the only school house needed was the one on Groton Road, No. 9 (that one itself had few enough students) With the coming of the railroad, opening of the quarries, etc., Graniteville grew rapidly In 1870 \$5,164 55 was appropriated for a new school on the present site The Graniteville School originally had 4 rooms

In 1880 the town generously granted \$150 for the purpose of an Evening School at Graniteville for a period of 12 weeks There were two classes and two teachers Instruction was confined to reading, writing, arithmetic and a little language work Interest was high and progress was good The Superintendent said that these were the most quiet classes he had ever visited. The pupils were there for work - and nothing else The following year \$150.00 was appropriated again for the same purpose

Mrs Harry Ingalls, who had previously attended No. 9, recalls the dedication of the flag raising at #10.

In a Town Report, the janitor at the Graniteville School was praised "His schoolhouse is always a credit to him. Few neater can be found."

According to the Town Reports, in the 1890's there was a growing sentiment that all who engaged in teaching should prepare for their work as in the professions of law, medicine and theology There were too many inexperienced teachers Four teachers and a superintendent attended a summer school of methods on Martha's Vineyard Island at a cost of \$30 to \$40 apiece Those attending were highly commended, for salaries were not high in the schools

Equal attention was to be given to all studies A special time was to be assigned to "nature studies" (How appropriate Gould's pasture at the No. 9 school was for nature study')

There was a change in drawing work It was called "Prang's Shorter Course", and consisted of form drawing, clay modeling, paper-cutting, and the use of forms in design (cubes, spheres, cylinders) The superintendent recommended a display of the Art Work in the Town Hall so that all could see what was being accomplished

A portion of the teachers received instruction in the "Swedish or Long" system of gymnastics given in Ayer (This was paid for by the teachers themselves) Physical culture was receiving much attention at this time all over the country and it included a careful study of anatomy, showing how an intelligent purpose lies behind each set of movements It was thought that although country children do not need a lot of exercise, it was noticeable that many were becoming hollow-chested and round-shouldered. Five minutes devoted to each session was thought to be beneficial, especially for weak or nervous children A Town Report stated that a one-hour course in physiology and hygiene was to be given for fourteen weeks to every reading child

Other changes at this time were

(a) Requirement for teachers to be Normal School graduates (or 2 yrs of training necessary)

(b) State Teachers' Exam required

(c) Consolidation of Schools

Questions raised were

1 Can grade children better their marks?

2 Can children become better behaved and more civilized?

3 Can their interest be increased?

4 Can attendance and tardiness records be improved?

5 Can the actions of the boys & girls be made less rustic or countryfied?

6 What can be done to improve morals and manners?

To quote from a Committee Report This committee is in favor of consolidation - first last and all the time A schoolhouse in every man's dooryard is the bane of our country schools

School reports requested new and better maps for the schools as the present ones were poor and not up-to-date (Cost would be \$150.00) The comment was also made that no portion of the dog money had been appropriated to the schools the previous year and had been customary (Perhaps they were waiting for the dog money - which in 1873 had been \$167.40)

At one time one class in Westford had 60 pupils but attendance was so irregular that many should have been sent to truant school It was decided that a \$20.00 fine for absence would be levied after two weeks if no absence excuse was forthcoming