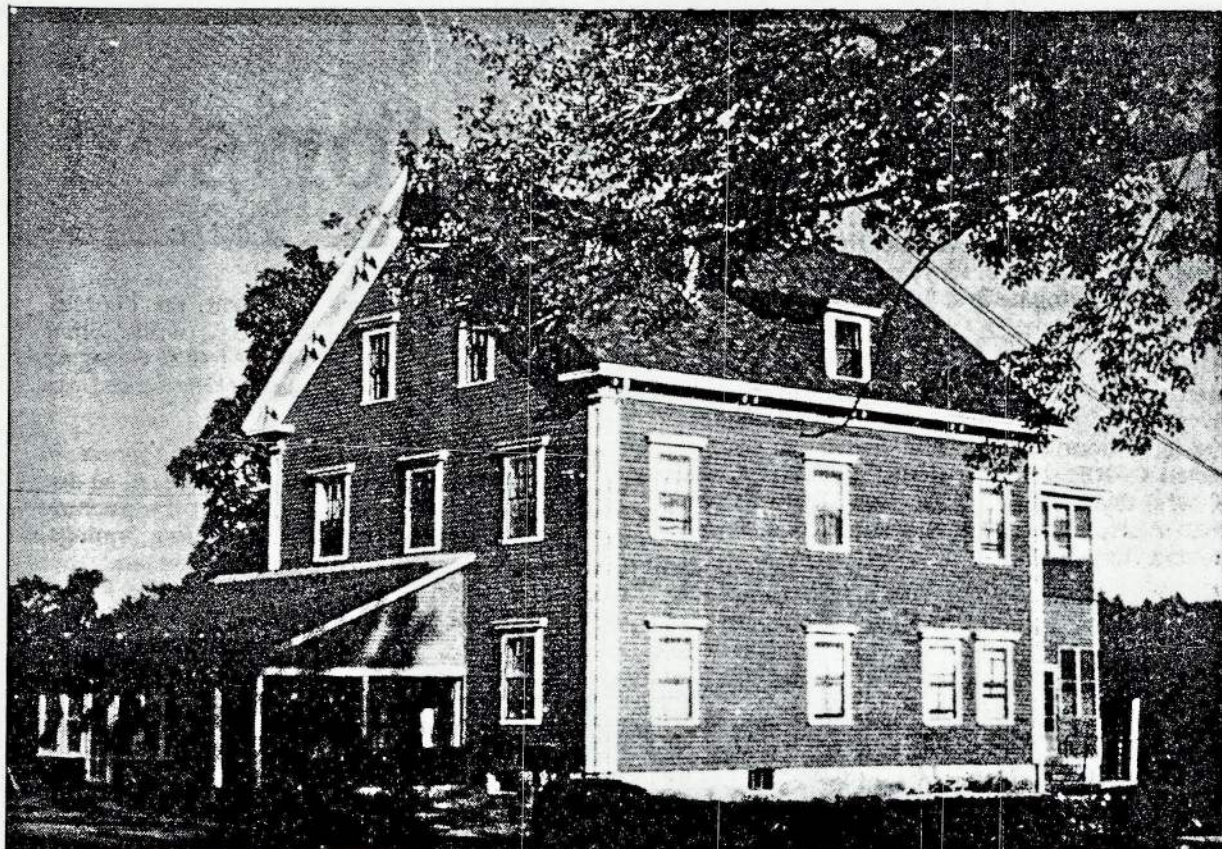


Graniteville School No. 10



BEARING LITTLE RESEMBLANCE to its 4-room beginnings, Graniteville District School No. 10 now is a residence. Built in 1880, it is better known as Sudak's general store, having served in that capacity from 1923 until after World War II.
(Courtesy 'Westford Recollections')

Expanding awareness of value of education

By June W. Kennedy

The following is part of a series on Westford schools.

Graniteville had only two or three houses until 1855. With the coming of the railroads and opening of the quarries, this part of Westford grew rapidly. In 1870, \$5,164.55 was appropriated for a new 4-room school — some residents may remember it as Sudak's Market.

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 — despite the lack of crewel embroidery, yoga, gourmet cooking and other such courses offered today for relaxation and creativity. The basics had been denied these citizens.

The superintendent claimed that these were the quietest

classes he had ever visited. The pupils were there for work — and nothing else. The following year, \$150 was again appropriated for the same purpose.

There was a growing sentiment in the 1890s 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. Consequently four teachers and the superintendent attended a summer school of methods on Martha's Vineyard Island at a cost of \$30 to \$40 a piece. 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". 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 Westford teachers received instruction in the "Swedish or Leng" system of gymnastics given in Ayer — again at their own expense. 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 some round-shouldered." Five minutes devoted to each session was thought to be beneficial, especially for weak or nervous children. A one-hour course in physiology and hygiene was to be given for 14 weeks to every reading child.

Requests were put in for new and more updated maps for the classroom. Other changes included:

□ SCHOOL, Page 9

Graniteville School #10

□ SCHOOL, From Page 7

(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 school 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 and girls be made less "rustic" or countrified?

6. What can be done to improve morals and manners?

The very questions themselves suggest the problems of the day.

A quote from a School Committee report reflects the thinking of the town at the turn of the century: "This committee are in favor of consolidation — first, last and all the time. A schoolhouse in every man's dooryard is the bane of our country schools."

Many of the small district schools did close their doors in 1908 with the opening of the William E. Frost School in Westford Center. William E. Frost served as preceptor of Westford Academy at the turn of the century; he was the gentleman who introduced the written examination to the system.

Sargent and Nabnasset schools likewise helped to consolidate the district schools.

June Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections", a series of historical vignettes and photos.

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