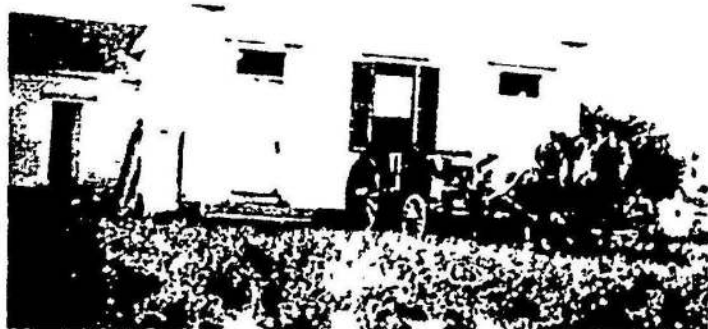


Westford Recollections Lyon School No. 9 Groton Rd.



Schoolhouse No. 9 on Groton Rd. as it appeared originally, just after it had been abandoned as a schoolhouse.

(Photo Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Albert Picking)

by Mrs. Charles Kennedy

I have no date for the opening of the Lyon School. Originally it, too, was a one-room school with attached woodshed. Once again there were two entries, one for boys and one for girls.

Bernice Pickings' grandfather divided this building into two seven-room apartments by adding a wing on the Groton Road side. As remodeled, it is now the Pickings home.

Lillian Wright, who attended the old Lyon School recalls an 8-day clock which hung on the wall, and said that school was from 8:45 to 3:30 - with an hour for lunch and a 15-minute recess both morning and afternoon.

On pleasant days, she remembers having lessons in Gould's pasture across the street, where they studied birds and wild flowers and learned poems. The atmosphere must have been most relaxing and fun, and from the docile look of the cows in the pasture now, I'd say it hasn't really changed much through the years. During recess all the children coasted down the hill on their double-runner sleds when there was snow.

The teacher had her school bell. The desks here were screwed to the floor, the center top opened up and there were drawers on the side with a space for writing on the top.

The teacher had a special cabinet of books which were always available to those who had finished their work.

At Christmas time everyone brought gifts. The boys cut down the Christmas tree and everyone decorated it with popcorn and cranberries. They also trimmed it with evergreens and made their own wreaths. Everyone had to speak a piece at Christmas time and Mrs. Harry Ingalls, who attended this school from 1884 (at the age of 7) still remembers the piece she memorized from her grandmother's old almanac.

"A Merry Merry Christmas
To crown the closing year
With peace and good will to
mortals

And words of holy cheer

What though the dreary
landscape

Be clothed in purest-white
If bright the fire and cheerful,
Light up our Christmas
night."

This school, like the others, housed grades 1 through 8 and, because many pupils never went on to the Academy, the teacher in this school gave graduation presents to her students. No. 9 school only had nine pupils when Mrs. Ingalls attended in the 1890's - so that when the boys wanted to play baseball she had to play on the team. Some years she recalls being the only girl in the school.

In talking with her, I mentioned the Parkerville section of town - to which she commented matter-of-factly: "I had a good horse, but I could get lost in the south part of town as well as I could have in Boston."

It was interesting to see the school reports and see how they coincided with the pupils' recollections. Both pupils with whom I conversed, mentioned the visits and tests of the superintendent. The Town Report of 1891 states that more than 180 visits to the schools were made by him so that he could keep watch of their progress. The superintendent frequently gave tests in arithmetic, language and geography. He did not give them to prove how difficult the problems were which they could solve. On the contrary, the questions were generally easier than the work done day by day with the teacher. However, the form of a question might be different from the book form, or the teacher's form, and thus the child's ability to think was measured and mere routines were avoided. In this way, too, the superintendent discovered which schools were keeping up to the required standards, and which were falling below it. It was recommended that these tests be given more frequently. Results were satisfactory. Two or three schools gave an average of 90% or more of



The present appearance of No. 9 schoolhouse - remodeled into a two-family dwelling.

(Photo Courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Albert Picking)

correct answers. The monthly exams and reports to the parents were considered helpful in keeping a closer connection between the schools, town and parents.

In 1891, too, it was reported that the work of the schools was not characterized by great variety from year to year. The methods employed were about the same monthly exams by teacher and superintendent. The teachers were merely given a course of study, expected to accomplish certain results - no cut and dried method - each at liberty - consequently the schools differed considerably.

Back to No. 9 - Mrs. Ingalls began attending school right after her 5th birthday, starting in April spring term (there were 3 terms then). There was good discipline at the school, for in a way it was like a big close family. On real hot days the teacher would let a boy go to the pump for a pail and pass the dipper around so everyone could have a sip.

The music supervisor came around once a week with a pitch pipe. Dr. Sleeper, an old-time doctor in town, came to visit. One of their teachers had a boyfriend who came to visit (which made fun for the students).

Finally the school was closed down because there were so few pupils. From then on, the children attended the Graniteville School.

The 1891 report stated that No. 9 was "a small school, Josephine Dange, teacher, made some progress."

For a short time after No. 9 School was no longer used for school purposes, the building became a clubhouse where plays were put on, but after having been set fire to a couple of times the town must have decided to forbid its use as such. As previously stated, it eventually was remodeled by Mr. Gould, Mrs. Picking's grandfather, to be used as a dwelling.

Next week Schoolhouse No. 8.