

Westford Eagle

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Westford Recollections- -Nashoba No. 4

by Mrs Charles S
Kennedy

This schoolhouse is located beside Famosi Nursery and can be seen from Route 495. The most recent owners were the Lairds who did a great deal of renovating to the building.

The present school building was built in 1872, although it has been speculated that a schoolhouse had been on this site since the mid-late 1700's. There are two foundations, one of stone and one of granite, but both of different shapes. Miss Ruth Tuttle was hired to teach here in 1903 but declined and went to Minot's Corner No. 6

instead. The original ceiling and plaster are intact and there are 6 x 6 beams mortised and pinned together. An original interior door still shows initials carved on it. A flag pole holder is on the front of the house. In stripping the wallpaper, the Lairds found the blackboards and initials on the wall. They painted over the board in the present dining room, but left the frame exposed -- certainly a conversation piece. They added a full-length dormer to the house. Whereas these district schools were built in the 1870's -- and for the most part went out of existence in the early 1900's --

Number of pupils under 5 years of age - 4

The reports stated that during the past three years there had been a considerable falling off in the number of children of school age reported by the assessors, and therefore a correspondingly smaller number of pupils in the schools. This was probably explained by the fact that many of those who had been in our schools for a few years had now become of that age when "necessity is laid on them to do for themselves, and they had passed out of the school room to take their places among the world's wage earners, while newcomers had not yet supplied the vacancies. "In some sections of town where a

few years ago we had schools of 25-30, we now have scarcely that number -- and the tendency seems to be downward for some time, unless there shall be a revival of "ye ancienne custom of large families, or a new influx of population."

The following statistical table includes the teachers' wages per month and the number of pupils in the schools in 1891

| |
|---------------------|
| Nashoba - 24 |
| Parkerville - 16 |
| Minot's Corner - 12 |
| Nabnasset - 18 |
| LSF - 12 |
| Lyon - 11 |



Nashoba School Number 4

(Photo by Westford Studios)

The average cost of schooling per pupil for the year 1891,

including books was

Centre - \$11.42

Minot's Corner - \$17.80

Nabnasset - \$13.28

Stony Brook - \$11.47

Forge Village - \$9.28

Graniteville - \$11.09

Nashoba - \$13.34

Parkerville - \$18.70

Lyon - \$28.66

Long-Sought-For - \$22.42

Irregularity in attendance caused the loss of a large proportion of the time our schools were in session. With 430 pupils in attendance, the average loss of time was 22 days per pupil. Time in actual weeks lost varied from 2 - 6 weeks among the schools.

In other words, attendance was hardly ever perfect but in the records of 1891 - 1892 showing perfect attendance for one term or more, I found the name of Ruth Tuttle as having been neither absent nor tardy.

In July, 1893, a superintendent was hired to cover three towns: Westford, Littleton and Ayer. It was the new superintendent's job to examine the premises, encourage regularity and promptness of attendance. He classified pupils according to their advancement and made promotions.

New text books had to meet with his approval and he held teachers' meetings. This enabled Westford to keep on the same level as neighboring towns.

In order to boost attendance, this superintendent made a Banner for "Best School in Attendance" and at the end of the first five months Parkerville sported it two months, Long-Sought-For, Lyon and Forge Village Grammer one month each.

In 1888, under the EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ACT, no child under 13 was to be employed while school was in session. Another law also required 30 weeks of school by all children between the ages of 8 and 14. This helped attendance.

In 1892 the School Committee was not able to give a very satisfactory account of the Westford Schools. Two good teachers resigned because of low salary, and at the close of the spring term four more resigned -- leaving nearly half of our schools with new teachers. Four or five schools suffered interruptions more or less severe, from sickness. One school was three weeks late in opening the winter term, and four others were closed for one or two weeks due to "La Grippe." A changeover of teachers and frequent interruptions impair the value of a school.

However the report states in describing the Nashoba School: "This has been one of the happy schools -- same teacher, Clara Smith -- no sickness and all is well."

Look for tales from Parkerville No. 5 next week!