

Westford Recollections:

School No. 6 Minot's Corner - Toy Turkey Farm

by Mrs Charles S Kennedy

In 1908 the town voted to give southeast district No. 6 \$50 toward erecting a schoolhouse, the first in the district. It is not known where this particular schoolhouse was located.

The only Minot's Corner #6 schoolhouse within the memory of the older people of this generation was a one-room building, built in 1875. It is now a part of the Toy Turkey Farm. In the town report for the year ending 1874, \$2,007 14 was appropriated for this one-room structure.

The building had two small entry halls - the boys entered through one, the girls through the other. There was a pot-bellied stove with the pipe running the length of the room. The wood was neatly stacked in the shed and it was the teacher's duty to keep the fire going. Miss Ruth Tuttle taught at this school for one year, in 1902 - 03, and she said that she often had her mind so intent on her lessons that she would forget and let the fire go out. The pay was a mere \$8.00 a week. Grades 1 through 6 attended here and in 1902-03 there were only 11 pupils. Minnie Perkins, a student there, gave me an account of school days at No. 6. She still has some class papers, and also a picture of her class, showing Miss Tuttle as her teacher.

The old-fashioned desks (with a hole cut in the right-hand corner for a receptacle for ink) were screwed to the floor. At the front of the room was a raised platform for recitations. An old maid teacher (not Miss Tuttle) - for it was said of her that she was most gracious) who was a strict disciplinarian, had a strap which she used unmercifully on a truant boy in the cloak room. For the most part, the students loved their teachers.

There is an account of a most unpleasant incident at the Minot's Corner School. The schoolhouse was entered several times and books to the value of \$4.00 or \$5.00 were destroyed (high in those days) and mutilated in such a manner as to be practically worthless, and notes of an offensive character were left about the room. The matter created considerable excitement and was brought to the attention of the school committee by the people of this section, who were anxious to preserve the good name of their school neighborhood. The incident was not repeated. An excerpt from the Town Report states "It is to be hoped for the good name of the town that there may be no recurrence of the trouble. It is an unmanly spirit which resorts to such acts."

1891 Report of the Truant Officer

In accordance with the requirement of the Commonwealth and the vote of the town - The Truant Officers present the following report:

Cases investigated - 8

Cases brought to trial - 0

In compliance with the statute requiring towns to

"provide suitable places for the confinement, discipline and instruction" of truant children, arrangements have been made to accept the Lowell Industrial School as the place of consignment for such of our children as may be truant.

W E Parsons

A P Choate

Eugene DeRhoen

Truant Officers

1892 - Rules and Regulations for Truants

Tardiness - first offense, excused but recorded

Second offense, reprimanded.

Second offense, may be suspended

Second offense, may be referred to committee and reinstatement at their option.

Absence:

1 day - written excuse

2 days - teacher shall investigate cause and if not sufficient, the matter may be referred to Truant Officer.

3-6 days - regarded as having withdrawn from school; referred to committee.

These rules were not meant to sound oppressive, but did help to prevent school skipping, carelessness, and needless tardiness. The town report states that probably in most of our schools these rules made little or no difference. Teachers were to have authority over behavior on school grounds.

Now back to the happier side - the holidays during the early 1900's were given great importance, and at Christmas there was a tree which the student's strung with popcorn, cranberries and paper chains. The teacher had a present for each and all, and everyone brought the teacher a gift to be exchanged at the party.

The students all walked to school, oftentimes through high snow drifts. At recess the typical childhood games of jacks, blind man's bluff, hopscotch, tag, and hide and seek were played. Minot's Corner School No. 6 was closed in 1908, the year that the Frost School was built.

Minnie Perkins, a student of Miss Tuttle's at No. 6, says that she could have bought this school for \$500 in 1915 and that her name was still on the blackboard when the building was sold to a Mr Stiles that year. At this time the school was renovated and changed into a home.