

EDUCATION IN THE BRIGHTON AREA PRE 1900 (cont.)

The teachers in these early one room country schools were often the daughter or son of a farmer in a nearby district or a resident of a village in the area. Quite young (sometimes only 16), most of them had only completed eight grades. These job applicants were examined at an interview with school officials, many of whom had not completed eight grades themselves. Witness the following copy of a teacher's certificate taken verbatim from the district's records: "The undersigned School Inspectors of the Township of Brighton Do Certify that A regular meeting of the Board of School inspectors on the 15 Day of April, Did personally Examen Miss Marrett Hoges (Mariette Hodges) in respect to Moral Charracter, Larning, and Co, And find her well qualified to teach A primery School in the township of Brighton for one year from the date here of, unles the inspectors for the tim Being Shal Sooner Revoke or Cansel this Certificate. Give under our hand And Seel this 15 Day of Aprile, 1844".

A majority of the female teachers married local men and remained in the general area. After marriage it was not considered proper for a woman to continue teaching. Male teachers were often hired for the winter term and to control the male pupils who would occasionally get out of hand and needed physical encouragement to behave. It was reasoned a man was better quipped to keep order when 'big boys', not needed for farm work, attended school. The men were paid about twice the wages paid women teachers. Often teachers 'boarded around' in the homes of farmers in the district, some of which were located more than two miles from the school. Sometimes there was no charge as the teacher would spend a few weeks in each home. Other times room and board and a laundry fee was paid.

The teacher usually had to walk, early in the morning, build the fire, sweep the floor, dust and carry out the ashes. More than once there was no school because the teacher's horse was stuck in the snow. Evenings were spent preparing lessons to teach eight grades the next day. In the early years paper and text books were scarce, so the teacher chalked lessons on the black boards, and pupils wrote answers on slates which were bound with felt to reduce noise.

This method of teaching was not all bad. There was a face to face relationship between teacher and pupil who stood up and recited orally, reading and spelling aloud, using the blackboard for arithmetic problems, diagraming sentences and to practice writing. It is believed that by being in the room where all eight grades were taught the younger pupils were given an opportunity to learn what to expect in the future. By listening and seeing the older ones recite they were challenged to do their best. (Compiled and edited by Marieanna Bair. To be cont.)

BRIGHTON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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