

CHRONOLOGY of the STOWE HIGH SCHOOL

On July 30, 1955, Ruth Bedell wrote a lengthy and thoughtful synopsis of the Stowe School System. To paraphrase it would be difficult and less pleasurable to read, so here it is, beginning on page 5 when she discusses the Village School, now the Helen Day Art Center and Library, quote:

In the summer of 1817 Dr. Joseph Robinson opened the first school taught in what is now our village. A school room was fitted up in a barn for the summer term. The following winter he taught in one of the apartments of Col. Raymond's hotel which was known as the Mansfield House and later burned. I found nothing more about the village school until 1861.

In 1861, school district No. 6 which includes our present village, erected a very handsome and commodious school of three rooms at the commencement of what is called the Hollow Road and nearly opposite our present church. This building forms a portion of our present High School. The cost of the school with site and grounds connected with it was a little more than \$5,000. A description of the building as it was built follows quoted from Vermont Historical Magazine 1871. "The main building is constructed with dimensions of 60 x 32 feet. The end facing towards Main St. with wings on the east and west sides so as to give the whole building a beautiful proportion. It is supplied with an elegant veranda in front. Reaching quite round to the wings, this is supported by twelve fluted columns of Doric style.

In the center of the main building is a spacious hall, where children and youth may play and exercise and from which they may pass to the yard, in the rear of the building. The wings and the main building on either side of the hall are finished off into elegant and spacious school-rooms, with adjoining rooms for clothes, recitations, etc.

The largest room is in the second story and extends the whole width of the main building, and the entire length except what is occupied for entrance and clothes room, which is reached by winding stairs, with elegant railings from either side of the vestibule. The belfry and dome are of a style and form peculiarly adapted to the size and shape of the building and give it a good finish. It is presumed there is not a better school house in the state, it is so pronounced by gentlemen from abroad who have seen the best ones, for a single district a better one may not be found." End of quote.

It was the original purpose of the district to maintain school the year round in the upper department, where not only the advanced scholars of the district but of the whole town and surrounding countryside might find opportunity for instruction in all branches of learning usually taught in the best academies and high schools in the state.

In 1871, the town was divided into 19 school districts in nearly all of which were supported summer and winter. The inhabitants of the several districts were accustomed to manifest due interest in and attention to their schools.

In the years near 1871 female teachers were employed much more than formerly. The residents felt the experiment had resulted favorably to the progress and condition of the schools.

January 1871 this article appeared in the papers. "The Honorable George Wilkins of Stowe has recently presented to each of the twenty school districts in his town a copy of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary New Illustrated Edition. Note by editor. What kind of an idea would it be to place by the side of the dictionary in Stowe in each school room – a complete copy of the Vt. Historical Gazetteer for the children and youth to have access to?"

Teachers were not required to obtain certificates in the earlier days so anyone could teach whom the committee would hire.

Later on, the Superintendent of Schools who was elected at March meeting held teachers examinations every spring and fall. They then gave certificates to those who were qualified to teach. Remember they needed only a grammar school education.

Early town superintendents were Patho Pike; Mrs. George Wilkins 1881 to 1888; Mrs. Alice Raymond 1891 to 1898. Our notes say Mrs. Wilkins was a cultured and public-spirited woman and gave unstinted service to the development of education in Stowe schools. As Superintendent of Schools, she

raised her work to such a high standard she was frequently called to other parts of Vermont to lecture on educational subjects.

For material taught in the early schools (lower grades) I refer you to Bigelow's History of Stowe. Beginning the year 1900 we have rather a complete history of the schools.

The children started school when they were only four or five years old and some were usually found in the ungraded schools until they were sixteen or seventeen.

The pupils had to complete the following books for a complete grammar school education: five Reading, three Arithmetic, three Grammar, two Geography, on History and three Algebra.

The schools were under the able guidance of Harriet Savage as Town Superintendent from 1898 to 1906.

In her report of the year 1900, we find these notes which are only a few of which she made.
Quote.

We have in the past year maintained 499 weeks of school at an average expense of \$8.77 per week. Twelve schools have been kept for a legal school year of twenty-eight weeks; 410 pupils registered in the schools. Total teachers' salaries for the year \$2,879.41. this item looks large but as a rule any teacher does more for eight dollars than for six. The one place where money should be freely spent in education is in good teaching and ultimately the teaching will improve according to the square of the increase in wages. The school house at the Forks was thoroughly renovated. Globes supplied for all the schools. Through the thoughtfulness of Miss Brackett a number of maps and charts have been added to the resources of the school. We are greedy for blackboards, window shades, a few recitation seats, chairs, kindergarten material and reading material not to mention larger things, but we keep our wants in with bit and bridle. In the present term fifty-three percent of the membership of the High and Grammar Schools was from outside the village. This calls for a weatherproof roof to shelter them, air space and seats enough so their welcome need not be cooled by perplexity. At least one additional room and one more teacher for the village school seems a necessity for the coming year. The school board and superintendent recommend a policy of consolidation of which means few schools with improved conditions, this in turn would result in economy and increased efficiency." End of quote.

In the list of items under school expense these are a few which I feel are interesting. Twelve cords of wood put in the shed West Hill \$16.20; Clara Mayo teaching school and board eleven weeks \$88.00; Bertha Mudgett teaching eight weeks and board \$40.00; Susie Bigelow teaching ten weeks and board \$65.00.

The year 1901 brings forth thirty-five weeks in the grades and twenty-eight in rural sections. It is of interest to note the schools in session with their teachers.

Village Primary grades one, two and three. Spring term, Alice Lovejoy; Fall and Winter terms, Susie Bigelow; averaged 34 pupils

Village First Intermediate grades four, five and six. Spring term, Bertha Barrows; Fall and Winter, Myra Herrick; averaged 36 pupils

Village Second Intermediate grades seven and eight. Spring term teacher unknown; Fall and Winter Nellie Watts; averaged 35 pupils.

Village Grammar grade nine. Spring term Nellie Watts; Fall and Winter Anna O'Brien; averaged 43 pupils.

Village High School - all terms C. L. Cowles; averaged 18 students.

Ungraded Schools

Moscow Josie Butler taught all three terms; averaged 28 pupils

Mills Spring term Myra Luce; Fall and Winter Hattie Porter; averaged 20 pupils.

Nebraska Spring term Hattie Carey; Fall Clio Cooley (now Clio Stafford) no school Winter term; averaged 9 pupils.

Branch Spring Mary Jenney; Fall and Winter Dora Fairbanks; averaged 22 pupils.

Forks Spring Anna O'Brien; Fall and Winter Dorothy Tate; averaged 25 pupils.

Luce Hill Mabel Godfrey all terms; averaged 9 pupils.
 Edson Hill Spring Gertrude Clark; Fall and Winter Mary Jenney; averaged 13 pupils.
 West Hill Effie Butler all terms; averaged 8 pupils.
 North Hollow Spring Bertha Isham; Fall and Winter Lena Brown; averaged 17 pupils.
 South Hollow Spring Blanch Atwood; Fall M. Belle Hill; Winter Hattie Carey; average 13 pupils.
 Lower Village Fall Myra Luce. The rest of the year the pupils went to the Village.

The other districts mentioned previously apparently were not in session because of small enrollments. The pupils walked to the nearest school in session.

The course of study for schools put out by the state and endorsed by the State Superintendent made necessary nine years of thirty-six weeks each to complete common school education. Four years more of High School would enable the students to graduated with a standing worth graduating for, fitted either for some college course or to receive the teacher's certificate according to our present state law.

In bringing the work of the school into line with state regulations, Drawing was introduced in all the schools.

1901 saw the first graduation from Stowe High School. May Adams (the present Mrs. Neil Robinson) was a member of this class.

1903 there were 194 pupils registered in the graded school and 205 in the ungraded or rural schools. The graded school was required to keep thirty-six weeks while the ungraded put in twenty-eight.

The "Silver Cup" won in the Spelling Match at Morrisville was visible and tangible proof of something accomplished in the schools.

June 1902 the High School sent out two graduates and saw fifteen finish the work of the grades. Nearly all of those fifteen went on into the High School in the fall.

The school people were anxious to make the course of study such as would be most benefit to the pupils.

The teacher's course was believed to have been of great value. This course consisted of Psychology; History of Education; School Management; Principles and Methods with practice work.

They wished to increase the Science work. They believed Books and Conveniences for Science study would do much for the school.

1904 the problem of finding teachers had been a real and perplexing one.

A large class of infants entered the primary room. Their progress under their skillful teacher, Susie Bigelow, was highly pleasing.

This paragraph seems worthy of note. Quote. "Stowe is interested in its Central School. It is one of the necessities for our prosperity. The first condition for its continuance is in its teachers. The second condition lies in the building. Our school is not worthy sheltered. Once the school was new and modern,

but that was forty years ago. It has had repairs, changes and additions, but still there is the serious problem, how to provide for the health and safety of the two hundred who gather there." End of quote.

1905 found the Nebraska school open with an enrollment of twelve. Teachers were Isabel Adams fifteen weeks; Etta Towne eight weeks.

In the line of repairs the steam heating plant was placed in the graded school.

The spring of 1904, the High School became associated with



Athletics. Baseball fever touched the boys. Although they sometimes met defeat they were training their muscles and skill for future victories.

In the fall the village street often found the principal and the boys practicing military drill. The audience loved to see the erect carriage and the quick obedience which went with military practice.

Basketball arrived on the calendar for both sexes.

Mental athletics had been furnished by debates and spelling matches. They still maintained the "Silver Cup" of which they were justly proud.

All these things showed life in the school. All had a place in the educative process.

1906 found Harriet Savage serving her last year of town Superintendent. She had done much for the school system in the past eight years.

This year found the Sterling School open after a period of being closed, the number of pupils in the district apparently warranting it. There were twelve of them. Lena Brown taught thirteen weeks and Susie Russell fifteen weeks.

There were 456 pupils registered in the schools.

1907 – H. A. G. Abbe, Town Superintendent.

The roof of one of the wings on the Village School was raised to make another room. New floors were laid upstairs and down.

An epidemic of Scarlet Fever raged in the Moscow District.

The Superintendent recommended that the rural schools be repaired considerably. An expression, which tells the story quite clearly, was made by him. Quote: "Is it best for us to enjoy village improvements, while the district teachers and pupils gaze on rags? Or is it better for us to train our school children to learn neatness in outward appearances?" End of quote.

A suggestion was made to introduce practical agriculture and forestry into the curriculum.

1908 This quotation appears at the beginning of the school report. It has been repeated many times, no doubt will be repeated many more as it contains much good common sense. Quote: Training is everything; the peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but a cabbage with a college education. (end of quote) – Mark Twain.

Frank Graves came in as Superintendent for the next three years.

This year found the schools under a new system of supervision. The Union districts. This district was comprised of Elmore, Morristown and Stowe.

Much was said about the condition of the schools; the subjects taught and what should be done.

In the enrollment lists I found Susie Bigelow teaching grades one, two and three with fifty-nine pupils. (Susie, were you busy?)

The rural schools were the same except for the Gale District which was closed. The few pupils probably divided between Mills and Moscow which ever happened to be nearest their homes. There were 456 pupils registered in the schools. The roof of the other wing on the village school was raised to make another room. I should have thought they would have needed to raise more than that, with the number of pupils in the grades.

1909 – Mr. Graves had a bit of humor in much of his talk. I found this bit which has a slight chuckle in it. Quote: "In the maintenance and improvements of the schools during the past year some things have been accomplished; some things attempted, but not accomplished; some things neither attempted or accomplished. Our method of work has been a bit like a checker game, made up of dodges and jumps, and waitings to contemplate moves, comments of On Lookers who know the game from a distance." End of quote.

The village school was sadly in need of a new building. The seating capacity, lighting, ventilation and many other respects were sorely deficient.

The rural school buildings were becoming a bit more comfortable and attractive. Consequently, they were beginning to be the community centers. Exhibitions, socials, Christmas parties, Debates, Spelling matches and Sunday Schools were held in them.

The law on truancy was printed and sent to all schools as well as parents at the beginning of the school year. The attendance was much better the first few weeks or until they found the law was not enforced. Stowe had seventeen truantries.

Reports of each scholar were sent home twice a term. Spring and Fall terms averaged twelve weeks.

The Pledge to the Flag was being used in most schools of the United States in many places every Monday morning.

The law in our state required flags on all school buildings. The directions for saluting the flag were given to each school.

1910 – Mr. Graves was very good at finding quotations to put forth his points. Here is another one made by Theodore Roosevelt. Quote: “If you are going to do anything for the average man, you have to begin before he is a man. The chance of success lies in working with the boy and not the man.” End of quote.

The rooms were very crowded. The teachers had in the forties and fifties in each room with three grades. No teacher can do satisfactory work with this number. The school board realized this point and moved the Cape Cod School (*ed. note: now known as the Bloody Brook Schoolhouse*) to the village for the primary room for grades one and two.. Then each room had two grades.

The moving of the building caused much excitement. The job was done by Elmer Barrows, (Orpha Barrows’ grandfather) for one hundred dollars. The building was put on rolls and drawn by a pair of horses. Of course the Covered Bridge in the village was standing so they cut across the river in back of the present Claude Adams home and brought it to its present resting place.

In the repairs list these items were noted. The Luce Hill building has a badly leaking roof, no chair for the teacher, no settee for classes. The old benches still left in some schools are uncomfortable and cheerless, some stoves are cracked and have neither slides or dampers. (Rather a sad state of affairs I would say.)

A quantity of books was purchased. Some of these were the “Jones Readers” for all grades, Arnold’s with Pen and Pencil Language, many others. Probably no other one thing the school board did, increased the interest of pupils and some parents as well as the furnishing of an adequate supply of books. More progress was made in Reading and Drawing than any other subjects.

The new Aldine Readers proved a success in the schools where the teachers faithfully followed the manual.

Phonic at this time was no longer Greek to some of the teachers, who found that if a child knew the sound value of his letters he would be able to pronounce many new words for himself.

Some of the scholars wrote well in their Copy Books but they wrote frightfully everywhere else, evidently regarding writing as a distinct subject unworthy of attention except during writing period and being educated to this idea by the inattention of the teach. (much of this is true today.)

We have heard nothing about Music up to this point. It seems each school had at least one singing book for the teacher and some had books for the pupils. Nearly all schools did some singing and some work with notes was taken up. (It depended on the teacher.) Stowe Village had an excellent music program, George Burnham being the instructor.

Eleven rural schools were in session now: Edson Hill, Forks, Luce Hill, Mills, Moscow, North Hollow, South Hollow, Pucker St., West Hill, Branch, and Brownsville.

1911 found Leonard T. Cole the District superintendent and W. H. Douglass Principal.

The ladies Relief Corps of Stowe presented a beautiful silk national flag to each school room in town.

This next item was rather unique I thought. The Superintendent recommended that all outhouses be so arranged with cement work and underground tiling that they could be flushed from the schoolhouse roofs at every shower by means of eave spouts. I doubt if this recommendation was carried out – at least it wasn’t in the school I attended.

The proposal to abolish all rural schools and transport children of every grad to a great central institution, to be taught by the ablest instructors, under perfect conditions, with faultless methods, was a

wild impractical scheme of dreamy theorists, an educational fad. (The dreamers' theory came true in 1954.)

The Superintendent recommended that a few schools be continued in winter for the benefit of older pupils who could not attend the village school. He also recommended that the ninth grade and High School students pass final examinations issued by the State Superintendent of Education and receive additional credentials from that source.

1912 the credit system was introduced in the High School by the School Board for graduation. Eighty-two credits were required for full graduation.

This year also found the "Curfew Law" in force. The signal, which probably was a bell, sounded at 7:30 at night in the winter and 8 o'clock in the fall and spring terms. When the signal was given every pupil of the school was to be in his home. The regulation, supposedly, was rigidly enforced. The purpose of the Curfew was to have students in their homes devoting their time to study until bedtime. This law lasted three years.

1913 – There were 456 pupils attending the eleven rural and village schools. Twenty-two teachers were employed. The average grade schools teacher's salary was \$9.30 a week. The rural schools salary was \$6.67 (not much of an increase the past twelve years.)

It seems there was a lack of dictionaries in the school. Mention was made of it.

Superintendent Carlton D. Howe believed that the time had come when serious consideration should be given to the erection of a new High and Graded schools. The building at that time was overcrowded, badly arranged, inadequate and ill adapted to the needs of the school.



The activities of the school included a Farm Products and Domestic Arts Contest held in the fall. Schools in Stowe, Morristown and Elmore registered entries. There were one hundred forty-seven entries from Stowe, which included corn, potatoes, vegetables, tomatoes, cooking, and sewing. This was a big affair.

1914 Superintendent Howe was again at the helm.

The rural schools were in session thirty weeks while the village kept thirty-six weeks. At the beginning of this school year an Agricultural course was introduced in the High School with R. Lloyd Chaffee as instructor. This was a three year course. The instructor was hired during the summer months to supervise the boys' work and he also gave much good advice to the farmers.

A class of "Current Events" was taught. You didn't find the boys reading the "Sports" page first. They could carry on a conversation with the majority of the adults on any worldly affair. (Remember, these were the beginning years of World War One.)

Also a course in Public Speaking was carried on.

Mr. Wm. English was Principal of the High Schools at the time.

During the years 1915 through 1921 little was said about the schools, except of the minor repairs made in the rural sections. These were War years. Something other than schools occupied the minds of the citizens.

In the Health Officer's report of 1922, this caught my eye. Any family having a disease such as Whooping Cough, Mumps, Measles, etc. and not having a doctor in attendance, could report the cases to the Rural Mail Carrier, or in the village to the Post Office, or at the Moscow Store.



1923 – The Annex or Science Room was added to the High School. There were now eight Rural Schools keeping: Moscow, Mills, Branch, Edson Hill, West Hill, North Hollow, South Hollow, and Brownsville. There were 257 pupils registered in the schools. (Quite a difference in 10 years.)

1924 – Supt. Leonard Smith was supervising the district. In his remarks I found this statement. Quote: “While we are doing good work in our schools, we are not doing as much to put our school property into shape to meet present day standards as might be expected of as progressive a community as Stowe.” End of quote.

1925 – The School Director’s report stated the basement in the Village School was cemented to take care of the surface water in the spring. Also the walk in front of the building was resurfaced. Also a new macadam walk was made to the Primary Building.

Again we hear about the outhouses in the Rural Schools. They were a health hazard in winter especially, because the children must break a path through the snow drifts to get to them and when they arrived there, the door most likely had been blown in and the house full of snow. (I remember distinctly of having to brush the snow off the seats before sitting down. We survived though and were tough.)

1926 – There were 379 pupils registered in the schools. The School Directors thought they might have to reopen the Forks School. However, they didn’t. They pushed their elbows a little closer in the Village and the Branch.

Supt. Smith remarked how anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,000 had been spent each year for the last four years to patch up old buildings and they were no better than at the beginning.

1927-28-29 – There was little said about the schools. Remember we had the flood (of 1927), then depression during this time. The schools were without a Superintendent during some of this period.

1930 came along with Allan J. Heath as Supervising Principal of the town schools. Possibly he served in this capacity in twenty-nine.

Slate blackboards were put into the schools. Much work was done on the West Branch School. New toilets, cloak rooms, cupboards and lights were put in.

Many pupils availed themselves of the transportation to the village, thus causing overcrowding there. Consequently they had to enforce the old ruling of districts. The Charles Gale children had to go to West Branch. The children on Lemaire’s farm could go to the village if they wished.

1931 – Natt Burbank was District Superintendent. The Village Primary and West Branch had been remodeled to the point where they could receive a Standard rating, while Moscow was given a Superior one.

1932 – This year found eighteen students graduating from the High School, the largest class ever to graduate thus far. This particular class was quite wealthy and their Treasury account carried them through a ten day camping trip on the shores of Malletts Bay. Mrs. Lola Douglass accompanied the class. I wonder if she enjoyed those ten days. The class certainly did.

The Mills District and Edson Hill were closed this year.

Ralph Noble served as the District Superintendent.

The years ’33-’34-’35-’36 found Lee Thomas Superintendent of the District. Little change was made in the schools except 1934 when Band, Shop, and Agriculture were put into the curriculum. Agriculture apparently go lost after a few years of its previous introduction.

In 1935 the average Rural School salary was \$595.00.

1937 – Edward Clark stepped in as Superintendent for a year. The average High School salary was \$1,000.

The Rural Schools had declined to five – namely the Hollow, Moscow, West Branch, West Hill and Brownsville.

1938 through 1946 found Milton Moore our Superintendent.

The schools followed their routines for the most part. 1939 the North Hollow School received a Superior rating. Also the town voted a sum to be put with Morrisville and Elmore for the purpose of hiring a school nurse. Miss Dears filled this position most satisfactorily. 1941 found us in the Second World War. Many teachers hit for defense jobs and big money. The teacher problem has been critical since.

As early as 1941 Mr. Moore recommended that a building committee be appointed which was done. I believe the first plans were presented in 1942. The grade school entered the new building in 1954.

In 1945, the Athletic Field was acquired. In 1946 playground equipment was purchased for the village school and much work was done on the Athletic Field.

1947 – Rupert Spencer took over the Superintendent's job. The first school bus was leased by the town. Mrs. Lola Douglass retired after giving thirty-eight years of her valuable services to the schools in Stowe.

1948 – The Driver Training course was added to the curriculum. The new Spiratube Fire Escape was put on to the High School.

The summer of 1949 saw the old high School taking on quite a change. The toilets were brought up from the basement. A new Central stairway was put in. The old study hall was divided and put into the present setup.

The first and second grades were divided. The first grade going to the Selectmen's Room in the Memorial building where it stayed until it entered the new building.

1951 found the third and fourth grades divided. A partition was run through the middle of the room.

1953 found Brownsville closed.

West Hill folded up some time just before World War II or during the War years.

July of this year the new grade school was started.

During the middle of the year Supt. Spencer took a position in the State Department of Education. Charles Boright took over as Superintendent.

Sept. 7, 1954 brought forth the Dedication of the New Elementary School and Gym. A \$246,000 job. A fine building but not yet large enough. For the reason all State officials stipulate that no teacher should be asked to teach over thirty pupils and twenty-five is the ideal setup. Cost includes furnishings.

At the time the New School opened all rural schools were closed. The third grade room in the village was put into a sewing room, as the state regulations required more space for Home Ec. Dept. in order to receive the state aid which it gives.

The fourth grade room was put into a teachers' room and the principal's office. The fifth and sixth grade room was used for the homeroom of the eighth grade, as there wasn't room for them in the new building as originally planned.

The Primary Room (ed. note: Bloody Brook Schoolhouse) as I stated in the early part of this paper was used for the Music Room.

The Music department was enlarged by the instrumental program, which had been dropped during the late thirties.

There is much more that could be included in the history of the schools. I neglected to state the time the old gym was added to the High School. Someone perhaps could supply that date.

In most cases the dates supplied probably fall a year behind the time the work was actually done because these dates came from Town Reports. Never throw your Reports away – they are valuable resource material.

I am very grateful to the following people for both oral and written material which they so graciously gave me.

Mrs. Maud Campbell; Mrs. Grace Lawson; Mr. Harry Downer; Mr. Roy Peterson; Miss Susie Bigelow.

Other references—

Bigelow's History of Stowe.

Mrs. Wilkins History of Stowe.

Hemingway's Gazetteer.

Thompson's History of Vt.

Biographies of Important People in Stowe.

Stowe Scrap Book

Town Reports

Ed. Note: Thank you, Ruth Bedell, for your compilation! Perhaps someone would be inspired now to continue her work, one decade's worth at a time.

Subsequent review of the archived newspapers in the Morrisville Centennial Library reveal the following:

Sept. 1, 1897: The village school commenced Monday with the largest number of scholars in years, there being thirty-five in the high school, thirty-six in the intermediate, thirty-eight in the primary and twenty-two in the grammar school, making a total of one hundred and thirty-one scholars.

August 16, 1899: The Board of School Directors have secured Mr. Clarence Coles of Craftsbury as Principal of the High School. Mr. Coles is a U.V.M. man and comes highly recommended.

June 13, 1900: The Graded School closed a successful term last Friday. Principal cowls went to his home in Hardwick Saturday. The prize offered for general high standing in the High School for the year ending June 8, is awarded to Miss Lelia Edson [Class of '02 – see class rosters elsewhere in this booklet]

June 19, 1901: Miss Lelia Edson, who is teaching school in North Wolcott, was at home during commencement last week. (Graduation exercises of the class of 1901 were held at the Unity Church on June 12th of this year.)

August, 4, 1905: The job of plumbing in the high school building has been taken by the J. A. Stafford estate.



