

## **Preface To The Waterboro Schools**

**Research by Marion A. Waterhouse, Waterboro, Maine.**

**Presented to the Waterborough Historical Society by Helen Knights Brock and Marion A. Waterhouse.**

In the beginning of the organized school system, about 1820, each district had one officer called the School Agent. Each town had a superintending school committee composed of not less than three persons, and each county had one school officer, called the Board of Education. The County officers (13-16) constituted the Board of Education of the state.

The district agents were elected annually by the voters in an open town meeting; or by the districts in their separate capacities. It was the duty of the District Agent to call district meetings; to see that the school house was kept in repair; to furnish fuel and utensils for the school; to employ teachers; to return annually, to the assessors of the town, a list of the scholars in the town, and a list of the scholars in the district. If there was not a suitable school in the district, or if the springs rain or the winter snow was too heavy to keep the schools open, it was up to the agent to provide a room--usually in his own home, where school could be kept. For this he was paid \$50.00 a year. This system did not always work well, as in most cases the teachers were chosen from the same district, and possible were not qualified. A stranger could possibly have maintained a higher order of discipline.

Each member of the Superintending School Committee held his office for three years; one went out of office each year and another was elected in his stead. It was the duty of the Superintending School Committee to fill the vacancies in their own board; to examine teachers and give certificates of qualifications; to inspect the schools; to direct the general course of instruction, and try to determine what textbooks should be used, and furnish destitute students with books at the expense of the town; to discharge incompetent teachers; to expel unruly students and to make a written report to the annual town meeting of the condition of the school. Finally, at the close of the year, the committee was to return the school statistics to the office of the Secretary of State. This committee was required to meet annually in County Conventions to elect a member of the Board of Education. Each member of the Superintending Committee received from the town treasure, one dollar per day for his services.

The town was required to raise, by an assessment on the property of the town, a school tax equal to forty cents for each inhabitant. The Citizens, by vote, could exceed this minimum to any extent they chose. The minimum school tax of forty cents on each inhabitant was equal to ninety-seven cents for each scholar of school age. The school tax raised by the town had to be divided among the districts in proportion to the number of scholars between the ages of four through twenty-one.

The banking corporations of the state were required to pay into the state treasury one half of one percent, semi-annually on their capital stock. Six percent interest on the permanent state school fund, together with the bank tax, was distributed annually

among the towns, in proportion to the number of scholars between four and twenty-one years of age. The income of the state school fund, when added to the local school tax, amounted to fifty-eight cents for each individual or one dollar and forty-one cents for each scholar.

The money raised and apportioned was spent for the teachers wages and board, for fuel and incidental repairs--the repairs not to exceed one-tenth part of the money apportioned to the district. The money spent for building new school houses and remodeling old ones was raised by a specific tax assessed on the property of the district for that purpose. A school district could raise any amount of money the voters wanted for building or repairing school houses, but a district could not assess a tax for supporting a school without a special grant from the state legislature for this purpose.

In case a disagreement occurred in the district, respecting the amount of money to be raised for any given object, or in reference to the location of the school house, an appeal had to be made and taken to the town.

As of 1850, if any town should neglect to raise and expend for schools the amount of money required by law, the town would forfeit not less than twice the sum or more than four times the sum of the efficiency. Should any town neglect to choose a Superintending School Committee, the town would forfeit not less than \$30.00 or more than \$200.00. If the Superintending School Committee neglected to make school reports, as required by law, such committee forfeited all claims for services and the school would not receive any part of the state school fund.

The qualifications of a good teacher were to have a good moral character; to possess a temper and disposition suitable for a teacher of youth and must have the capacity for the government and discipline of a school. A teacher had to be qualified to teach all branches of learning as are usually taught in public schools. The teacher was required to keep a register of all the essential statistics of the school, and return it to the Superintending School Committee before he was entitled to his pay for his services.

It was all very well for the state to have these requirements, but the Town of Waterborough was quite remiss in sending in the reports of the statistics, and the end of the year report.

There is available at the state of Maine Library the Superintending School Committee reports for every year of all towns, beginning with 1850, but there is nothing on each of the districts separately, but only as the town on the whole.

<b>Number of Districts</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>1854</b>	<b>1861</b>
Parts of Districts	1	1	1	
Number of Male Teachers	16	15		
Number of Female Teachers	12	13		
Wages of Male Teachers	\$12.80/mo.	\$12.50/mo.	\$16.31/mo.	

Wages of Female Teachers	\$1.46/wk.	\$1.25/wk.	\$1.73/wk.	
Length of School (weeks)	17.4	15.7/wk.		
Number of Schools in Good Repair	9	4		
Number of Schools in Bad Repair	7	11		
Whole Number of Scholars	860	912	885	766
Amount of School Money Raised by Tax	\$777.67	\$777.60	\$1,000.00	\$1,100.00
Minimum Tax Required	\$777.60	\$795.60		
Excess Raised	.07			
Defecit		\$18.00		
Amount of Bank Tax Apportioned	\$98.80		\$201.00	\$268.00
One New School this Period	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$600.00	
Amount Apportioned from the State School Fund		\$128.35		
Amount Expended for Private Schools		\$120.00		

*As of 1852, Waterborough schools rated 20th in the state.*

*Ref: Fourth report of the Board of Education in the State of Maine, 1850. Education Board - Annual Report 1852, 1854, 1855, 1856, etc...*

Even before 1850 and up through 1862 much emphasis had been placed on the necessity of replacing the small, ill contrived, and unhealthy school houses that existed in the town. During this period many of the school houses had been replaced, but it was absolutely necessary that the people of the district take a greater interest in the school and make a greater effort to keep the scholars in school. The Superintending School Committee of 1854, considered it highly desirable that greater interest should be manifested in the early selection of teachers competent to instruct and possessed of tact, energy and zeal. Third rate teachers are much like third rate articles of feed for the animals; they will carry the school through the winter, but the spring shows them to be in bad condition. After the Normal School located in Gorham much effort was used in selecting teachers of quality, but even so, the Agent system remained in effect until about 1894.

Previous to 1878, throughout the town of Waterborough, the textbooks had been provided by the parents, and there were so many on the sciences that the local merchants could not keep an assortment and gave up in disgust, making it almost impossible to obtain any. Besides that, there were many children whose parents through want of ability or disposition, failed to provide the books needed, and the time of these children was either wasted or they were absent from the school classroom.

In 1879, the Town bought the necessary books and sold them to the children at cost, bringing a general uniformity to all the schools, yet there was still a good margin for improvement. This same year the Agents were asked to provide blackboards for the

schools in all the districts, as they could be made from any soft wood covered with a simple black paint, containing no varnish.

This same year B.F. Bennett was paid \$12.00 to go to Augusta to plead for more money for the schools.

As of 1880, thirteen districts contained 461 school children and the twelve school houses were valued at \$10,000. This year the teachers were required to pass a written test to receive certificates to teach.

In 1891, flag poles were set at four schools and patriotism ran high. The free textbook system was established in 1894, and the district agent system was abolished.

Ever since the school districts were in force, there had never been an established rule as to the exact number of weeks the school had to be in session each term. This had depended a great deal on the agents; also how badly the children were needed at home to help with either the planting or the harvesting, also the affluence of the parents, especially during the cold months. In trying to equalize the number of weeks of school in each district, money was raised at the rate of eighty cents per inhabitant, rather than each student, and it was only fair that each district was served equally. By 1894, this was accomplished in all but one school, giving each twenty-two weeks.

The patriotic feeling of a few years earlier, by raising the flag over several schoolhouses, had abated to such an extent in 1896 that not a single flag was displayed over any school at any time the Supervisor visited throughout the entire year.

The Town of Waterborough was broken down into fourteen districts as follows:

- 1 - Waterborough Old Corner
- 2 - (Now part of Alfred)
- 3 - Pikes School (West Road)
- 4 - Red School (Middle Road)
- 5 - Carpenter School
- 6 - Ossipee Hill
- 7 - Chadbourne's Ridge
- 8 - Deering Ridge
- 9 - Ford's (East Waterborough)
- 10 - South Waterborough
- 12 - Carle's Corner
- 13 - Birch School (Bagley Road)
- 14 - Ossipee Mills
- 15 - Fluent's School
- 16 - North Waterborough
- 17 - This district was opened only temporarily, in the northern part of district #4, to accommodate a number of children too young to travel to #4.

On the 1856 map there are school houses at all these locations, but they are a bit hard to find. However, on the 1872 map from the York County Atlas the districts are in color and are clearer.

### **Earliest Schools -- (Probably District #1)**

From the history of York County we find the first school opened in Waterborough was held in a barn in 1784 and was taught by Samuel Robinson. Since we know that Waterborough Old Corner was established first, we assume this school was held in that part of town.

A family of Robinsons lived about 2 miles from Old Corner, and it is safe to assume that the first teacher was a descendant of Rev. Otis Robinson.

In 1789, 60 pounds were voted in lumber for the support of schools. (From York County history) Teachers before 1795 were: Masters Denny, Rogers, and Kinsman.

In 1791, appropriations were payable in produce and "due bills from Kennebunk."

In 1793 the appropriations were payable in due bills from merchants at Little Falls and Kennebunk.

Nathan Hanson was master.

The appropriation was increased to 100 pounds in 1810. The Shakers applied for a separate fund arising from their share in 1811, but were refused by the town.

It is also written that Samuel Fellows, Charles Perry, John Clark, and John Kelsey were teachers before 1820.

The first schools taught only reading, writing and arithmetic. In 1802, 300 was appropriated for use of schools (dollars or pounds).

Another inquiry about the early schools gives some information which does not agree with this.

*According to Hazel Storer:*

"February 6, 1804 the citizens met and voted to have school 6 weeks after moderator, Chapman Clark, says Nicholas Carpenter gives consent to let us have a school in his house. School master struck off to Nat Carpenter, son of Nicholas, at 5 shillings three pence per week."

*(This is taken from history which Dr. Carpenter had.)*

"Schools were built over a period between 1825 - 1850. This of course would include the Carpenter School and Red School houses."

"The building across from Annie Marshall's did not burn. It was moved, according to Dr. Carpenter. Mother went to school there, she believes, about 1892. (Knights of Pythias (or Knights Templar) met in a hall built by John Chase; this was opposite Annie Marshall's.) School was held there one term only, then to Center Waterborough. --End of letter from Hazel Storer

### **Support of Schools -- (After Maine became a State)**

1. The town was required to raise, by an assessment on the property of the town, a school tax equal to forty cents for each inhabitant. The Citizens, by vote, could exceed this minimum to any extent they chose. The minimum school tax of forty cents on each inhabitant was equal to ninety-seven cents for each scholar of school age. The school tax raised by the town had to be divided among the districts in proportion to the number of scholars between the ages of four through twenty-one.

2. The banking corporations of the state were required to pay into the state treasury one half of one percent, semi-annually on their capital stock. Six percent interest on the permanent state school fund, together with the bank tax, was distributed annually among the towns, in proportion to the number of scholars between four and twenty-one years of age. The income of the state school fund, when added to the local school tax, amounted to fifty-eight cents for each individual or one dollar and forty-one cents for each scholar.

The money raised and apportioned was spent for the teachers wages and board, for fuel and incidental repairs--the repairs not to exceed one-tenth part of the money apportioned to the district. The money spent for building new school houses and remodeling old ones was raised by a specific tax assessed on the property of the district for that purpose. A school district could raise any amount of money the voters wanted for building or repairing school houses, but a district could not assess a tax for supporting a school without a special grant from the state legislature for this purpose.

In case a disagreement occurred in the district, respecting the amount of money to be raised for any given object, or in reference to the location of the school house, an appeal had to be made and taken to the town.

As of 1850, if any town should neglect to raise and expend for schools the amount of money required by law, the town would forfeit not less than twice the sum or more than four times the sum of the deficiency. Should any town neglect to choose a Superintending School Committee, the town would forfeit not less than \$30.00 or more than \$200.00.

If the Superintending School Committee neglected to make school reports, as required by law, such committee forfeited all claims for services and the school would not receive any part of the state school fund.

3. In 1879, the Town bought the necessary books and sold them to the children at cost, bringing a general uniformity to all the schools, yet there was still a good margin for improvement. This same year the Agents were asked to provide blackboards for the schools in all the districts, as they could be made from any soft wood covered with a simple black paint, containing no varnish.

Even before 1850 and up through 1862 much emphasis had been placed on replacing the small ill contrived, and unhealthy school house that existed in the town. During this period many of the school houses had been replaced, but it was absolutely necessary that the people of the district take a greater interest in the school and make a greater effort to keep the scholars in school.

## Teachers

1. Qualifications of a good teacher:

- to have a good moral character
- had to possess a temper and disposition suitable for a teacher of youth
- must have the capacity for the government and the discipline of a school
- had to be qualified to teach all branches of learning as are usually taught in the public schools

Teachers were examined by the Superintending School Committee and given certificates of qualifications. In 1850 teachers were required to pass a written test to receive a certificate to teach.

2. An original 1833 teacher's certificate issued to John Sayward, Dorothy Wakefield's great grandfather, is still in existence.

3. Teachers were paid:

### Wages and Board

1850

- Male teachers - \$12.80 per month
- Female teachers - \$1.46 per week

1852

- Male teachers - \$12.50 per month
- Female teachers - \$1.25 per week
- Summer wages - \$1.73 per week
- Winter wages - \$16.31 per month

1854

- Wages varied from \$1.25 per week to \$2.25 per week to 1861.

## **Buildings**

1. School buildings were located in districts of the town as follows:

- 1 - Waterborough Old Corner
- 2 - (Now part of Alfred)
- 3 - Pikes School (West Road)
- 4 - Red School (Middle Road)
- 5 - Carpenter School
- 6 - Ossipee Hill
- 7 - Chadbourne's Ridge
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- 15 - Fluent's School
- 16 - North Waterborough
- 17 - This district was opened only temporarily, in the northern part of district #4, to accommodate a number of children too young to travel to #4.

2. In the period 1840 - 1850 specifications were established for the school houses, including placement of the stove, length of stove pipe, size of school, depending on number of scholars, size of district, etc.

## **High Schools**

- North Waterboro -- probably 1889 or 1892
- Waterboro Town Hall 1894 -- 1920's

Pupils were also enrolled in other nearby high schools (like Alfred) where Ernest G. Knights graduated in 1892.

## **Supervision of Schools**

1. In the beginning of the organized school system, each district had one officer called the School Agent. George Knights, father of Ernest G. Knights, was Agent for District #10.

Each town had a Superintending School Committee composed of not less than 3 persons.



Each county had one school officer. The county officers constituted the Board of Education of the State.

2. The district agents were elected annually by the voters in an open town meeting, or by the districts in their separate capacities.

3. It was the duty of the district Agent to: I call district meetings I see that the school house was kept in repair I furnish fuel and utensils for the school I employ teachers I return annually, to the assessors of the town, a list of the scholars in the town, and a list of scholars in the district

If there was not a suitable school in the district, or if the spring rains or the winter snow was too heavy to keep the school open, it was up to the agent to provide a room - usually in his own home, where school could be kept.

4. For this he was paid \$50.00 a year. By 1891 wages for the Agent had increased to \$110.00 per year. The agent system remained in effect until about 1894.

This district system did not always work well, as in most cases the teachers were chosen from the same district. Possibly a stranger could have maintained a higher order of discipline and might have been better qualified.

5. Each member of the Superintending School Committee held his office for 3 years. One went out of the office each year and another was elected in his place.

6. Duty of the Superintending School Committee was to: I fill vacancies in their board I examine teachers and give certificates of qualifications I inspect the schools I direct the general course of instruction I try to determine what text books should be used I furnish destitute students with books at the expense of the town I discharge incompetent teachers I expel unruly students I make a written report to the annual town meeting on the condition of the school (an original report on the condition in the various district schools is available locally) -- and, finally, at the close of the year-- I return the school statistics to the office of the Secretary of State

This committee was required to meet annually in County Conventions to elect a member of the Board of Education.

7. Pay -- each member of the Superintending School Committee received from the town treasury \$1.00 per day for his services.

8. As of 1850, if any town should neglect to choose a Superintending School Committee, the town would forfeit not less than \$3.00 or more than \$200.00. If the Superintending School Committee neglected to make school reports, as required by law, such committee forfeited all claims for services and the school would not receive any part of the state school fund.

Reports of the superintending School Committee are available at the State of Maine Library for every year of all towns, beginning with 1850, but there is nothing on each of the districts separately - only on the town as a whole.

As of 1850, Waterborough schools rated 20th in the state.

## **Terms**

1. School terms in the 1850s were shorter than now, because of conditions at the time.

- 1850 - length of school - 17.4 weeks
- 1852 - length of school - 15.7 weeks

Ever since the school districts were in force, there had never been an established rule as to the exact number of weeks the school had to be in session each term. This had depended a great deal on the agents; also how badly the children were needed at home to help with either the planting or the harvesting, also the affluence of the parents, especially during the cold months.

In trying to equalize the number of weeks of school in each district, money was raised at the rate of eighty cents per inhabitant, rather than each student, and it was only fair that each district was served equally.

By 1894, this was accomplished in all but one school, giving each 22 weeks.

## **What Taught, Etc.**

1. Previous to 1878, throughout the town of Waterborough, the textbooks had been provided by the parents, and there were so many on the sciences that the local merchants could not keep an assortment and gave up in disgust, making it almost impossible to obtain any.

Besides that, there were many children whose parents through want of ability or disposition, failed to provide the books needed, and the time of these children was either wasted or they were absent from the school classroom.

In 1879, the Town bought the necessary books and sold them to the children at cost, bringing a general uniformity to all the schools, yet there was still a good margin for improvement.

The free textbook system was established in 1894, and the district agent system was abolished.

In 1891 patriotism ran high and flag poles were set at four schools. By 1896 the patriotic feeling of a few years earlier had abated to such an extent that not a single flag was displayed over any school at any time the Supervisor visited throughout the year.

