

Orford School District #7

Orford School District No. 7 was one of the original school districts established in the Town of Orford in 1807. In later years, School District No. 7 was also known as the Davistown School or the East Orford School. School District No. 7 encompassed the northeast corner of the Town of Orford, commonly referred to as Davistown, and was bounded on the north by Piermont and on the east by Wentworth. The original schoolhouse was located near where the current bridge on Route 25-A crosses Brackett Brook on the south side of Route 25-A, and on the east side of the Old County Road, so called, that went from Route 25-A over the hill behind Lower Baker Pond, through the Ellsworth Hill section of Wentworth, and then down into Wentworth Village.

The school year was generally broken down into three terms of about 10 weeks each. The curriculum usually included reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography, language, physiology, and United States History. In 1879, there were an average of 8 boys and 9 girls in grades 1 through 8 in District No. 7, and teachers were paid about \$17.00 per month.

By 1895 much of East Orford was described as lapsing into decay, including the Quinttown, Halltown and Davistown sections. Many of the youth of Orford were moving west due to the allure and opportunities they believed it offered, or to pursue the educational and social advantages of larger villages. In addition, land values and prices for farm produce were dropping because of competition from the west. For example, in 1902 there were only 183 students registered throughout Orford, as compared to 456 in 1849, a 60% decline. As a result, many of Orford's school districts closed and schools were consolidated, which was the trend throughout New Hampshire. However, the Davistown school dostrict remained open until 1935.

The 1903 Annual Report shows that the total expenses to operate the Davistown School were \$269.83, of which \$227.50 was for teacher salaries. Other expenses were \$5.63 for supplies and repairs, \$10.50 for wood, \$15.00 for transportation, and \$11.20 for care of the school house. With the building being nearly 100 years old, and so little spent on repairs, it is easy to see why the school house was in poor condition. As a result, the School Board proposed in the 1903 School Warrant that a new school be built. The warrant articles included the following: "(By petition) To see if the district will vote to locate and build a school house in the east part of Orford known as the Davis Town School District. To choose a committee to locate and build said school house. To raise such sums of money as may be necessary to pay for the school house lot, and for the purpose of building and fitting such school house."

Construction of the new school house was begun in the summer of 1903 and completed in early 1904. The new school house, which is currently the home of Michael and Jessica Carter, is on the north side of Route 25A and the west side of East Cemetery Road, near the Route 25A bridge that crosses Brackett Brook. The land for the school house, about one-half acre, was purchased from Laura E. Rollins for \$30.00 and the materials and labor to build the school cost

\$939.15, for a total cost of \$969.15. The hauling of materials and the labor to construct the school house were provided by local Davistown residents. The 1904 Annual Report notes, "The scholars at Davistown seem to have taken a greater interest in their work since entering the new school house. The teacher and scholars are doing very good work."

A circa 1920 photograph at the Davistown School includes 14 students, including Glenn Pease, Walter Mack and Marion Chase. The "Pupil's Report Book" for Glenn Pease for the 1920-1921 school year shows that the school year included three terms and each term was divided into a first half and a second half. Glenn Pease's "Pupil's Report Book" shows the following subjects were taught that year: reading, spelling, writing, drawing, grammar or language, physiology and hygiene, arithmetic, geography, mental arithmetic, history, music, Jr. High arithmetic, composition, science, algebra, nature study, and civil government. Students were also graded on behavior, application and care of books, and the reports included absences and times tardy.

A 1928 photograph taken on Memorial Day in front of the Davistown School shows that there were only 8 students, including Ruth (Ladd) Brown, John Ladd, Stanley Chase, and Edna (Perry) Simpson.

By 1931, the Davistown School was commonly referred to as the East Orford School. Only nine students were enrolled that year. The 1931 Annual Report recommended for the first time that the East Orford School be closed, as follows: "It is the recommendation of the Superintendent that the Orfordville building be installed with a water supply not only adequate for the present enrollment, but also for the pupils at East Orford and Mt. Cube Schools. At present sufficient water is only available for a fraction of the time. These three schools in my judgment should be consolidated. Two teachers could give the instruction of the three at present, and furthermore, teachers who have trained especially for upper and lower grades could be appointed. Larger classes would ensure more competition and possibilities for group work. As a general thing children do better work and get a broader education in a village than in a small rural school. There is a large room available at the Orfordville school. It would be reasonable to expect that there would be financial gain in the operation of the consolidated school. The objection of difficulty of winter transportation will be brought up. Drift fences will keep the roads open most of the time. Undoubtedly a day might be lost now and again, but this could be offset by special effort in attendance during good weather."

The 1932 Annual Report shows that enrollment had increased to 12 students. The Superintendent again recommended that the East Orford and Mt. Cube Schools be consolidated with the Orfordville School. He said: "I am firmly convinced that ultimately the district must follow in the path of progress and consolidate the East Orford and Mt. Cube schools with Orfordville, both from the viewpoint of education and finances. During the last ten years nearly three hundred one-room schools in the state have been closed, and scholars transported to more centralized and more modern school houses."

The 1935 Annual Report, published January 31, 1935, included the following: "It is my opinion that the East Orford and Mt. Cube schools should be consolidated with Orfordville in September. In June 1929, there were reported 603 one-room schools and last year 476 in the State. The number was reduced 20 last year. The trend throughout the county is toward consolidation where larger classes and real competition can be effected. A man teacher can very well take the upper grades, and a woman teacher the lower grades, thus bringing more specialized instruction to the children of all three schools. Good roads and transportation are available. The Orfordville School is amply equipped with heat and water. Very little new equipment is needed. The situation seems ideal for consolidation. This would perhaps work some inconvenience to a very few, but the good of the larger number must always be considered." The East Orford and Mt. Cube Schools did in fact close at the end of the 1934-1935 school year. In its last year, the total enrollment was 12, with average enrollment for the three terms of 9.8 students. The Superintendent visited the school 17 times that year, likely as part of the planning to close the school. The Superintendent's Report for 1936 includes the following: "Since my last report the East Orford and Mt. Cube Schools have been closed, and the pupils of these schools transported to the Orfordville School."

Davistown Schoolhouse #7

School District No. 7 encompassed the northeast corner of the Town of Orford, and was bounded on the north by Piermont and on the east by Wentworth. The original schoolhouse was located in the Davistown area of the township on the south side of the highway leading from Orford to Wentworth, now known as Route 25-A, and on the east side of the Old County Road, so called, leading from Route 25-A to Ellsworth Hill in Wentworth, near where the current bridge crosses Brackett Brook.

In 1879, Miss Emily Strong taught the summer term at the Davistown school, which was 10 weeks long. The students included 8 boys and 9 girls in grades 1 through 8 and she received \$17 per month for her service. Martha Coombs from Rumney taught the fall term of 10 weeks with 8 boys and 9 girls and the winter term of 8 weeks with 9 boys and 5 girls and received \$19 per month. In 1880, Miss Emily Strong taught both the summer and fall terms with seventeen students and received a salary of \$17.80 a month. Miss Strong stressed vocal music and composition. Mabel (Sherburn) Pease attended school at the Davistown schoolhouse. The Orford Town Report for 1884 reports that Mabel Sherburn achieved the honor roll in both the summer and winter terms.

By 1895 much of East Orford was described as lapsing into decay, including the Quintown, Halltown and Davistown sections. Much of the youth of Orford was moving west due to the allure and opportunities they believed it offered, or to pursue the educational and social advantages of larger villages. In addition, land values and prices for farm produce were dropping because of competition from the west. As a result, in 1902 only five of Orford's sixteen schools remained in operation, including the Davistown school. The Upper Street and Indian Pond Schools were providing instruction in reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, language, physiology, and United States history. The Davistown School and the Orford Street School in the Academy Building offered the same curriculum with the inclusion of algebra. The Orfordville School added general history, physical geography, Latin and Rhetoric to those subjects. There was an average of 183 students registered for the year in all the schools, as compared to 456 students who attended Orford schools in 1849.

By the early 1900s the original Davistown schoolhouse was in poor condition and the Town decided to build a new school on the opposite side of Route 25-A. The new school was started in the summer of 1903 and completed in early 1904 at a cost of \$969.15.

According to the diary of Francis R. Pease, in August 1903 he hauled some of the lumber that was used to build the new schoolhouse. Entries in his diary include the following: Wednesday, August 5, 1903: "Went to Warren and got a load of boards for the School house had 1,200 ft got \$3.00 a thousand for drawing." Thursday, August 6, 1903: "Went to Warren got boards had 1,500." He would have drawn the lumber on a wagon with his team of horses, a round trip of at least 18 miles, maybe more, depending on where the mill was in Warren.

With the completion of the new school, in early 1904, the school report notes, "The scholars at Davistown seem to have taken a greater interest in their work since entering the new school house. The teacher and scholars are doing very good work."

After the building ceased to be used as a schoolhouse, it was fitted out as a Red Cross Station during World War II.

Addie (Bedell) Pease taught school at Davistown in 1914 according to the Orford Town Report. Addie was the wife of Clarence Pease, who was the son of Chase Pease. Clarence and Addie Pease lived on the farm just west of the Pease farm. In the same year, Glenn F. Pease was on the Honor Roll all three terms.

Gerald E. Pease and Doris E. Quackenbush were married November 4, 1951. They purchased the schoolhouse from Lucy Worthington to use as their home. Glenn F. Pease's diary entry on October 4, 1951 includes, "Got \$1,500 at Plymouth for Lucy for school house." Gerald Pease reports that his father Glenn bought the school house for him and he paid his father back by having \$1.50 a week withheld from his pay.