

## ORFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### “EXPLORING ORFORD’S EARLY SCHOOLS”

Overview for the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Exploring Orford Program presented on October 16, 2011, by Carl Schmidt

1\*. This afternoon, in the first part of our program, we’re going to do our best to give you a summary overview about schools during Orford’s first one-hundred and fifty years or so. We’ll describe how during one period the town had at least 16 individual school districts, each with its own one-room schoolhouse. We’ll shed light on what going to school was like in those one-room schools. And we’ll also talk about the New Hampshire State government’s efforts to promote education and how those efforts affected Orford. Also, we’ll describe the short-lived private Orford Academy, as well as the unique circumstances surrounding the start of Orford’s High School.

Then, in the second half of this afternoon’s program, after enjoying refreshments here in the church vestry and investigating our very special exhibit of Orford school memorabilia, we’ll invite you to use the new map included in today’s handout to take a self-guided tour around Orford to find the 21 sites of former schoolhouses that the Orford Historical Society has identified for you. We’ll explain more about that at the end of my talk.

2. Let’s start by asking what schooling was like when Orford began almost 250 years ago. In 1761, New Hampshire’s colonial governor Benning Wentworth granted a charter that created the

township of Orford. The land was then mapped out and divided into lots, one of which was set aside for a school -- but, as it turned out, never used for that purpose. Instead, not long after 1765, the year in which the town first began to be permanently settled, "founding father" Israel Morey donated what was described as "a barnlike structure" for use as Orford's very first schoolhouse. It was located near the river behind what is now the Masonic Hall here on Main Street. In addition to being the first school, the building also was used as the town's first meeting-house for both religious services and town government meetings.

I should point out that throughout the early settlement of New England, as part of the Puritan ethic, it was generally accepted that education and religion should both be promoted among the citizenry. Also, a law, reenacted in 1693 by the Colony of New Hampshire after it separated from Massachusetts, required all towns "to provide by taxation for a schoolhouse and a schoolmaster's salary" -- but the law did NOT require attendance at school. (I should note that compulsory education was not required in the state of New Hampshire until 1871 -- almost 100 years after Orford began to be settled.)

In the new town of Orford, by 1770, in just five years, this little settlement in the wilderness had grown to a population of 138 souls, of which 49 were children eligible for schooling, being "over three and under 21 years of age". As a result, on October 8, 1770, in the earliest of what has since become many recorded Orford town votes concerning schools, it was decided to "hire a school-master for six months". As I have come to know -- at least somewhat -- the ways of Orford, I suspect that first school decision was not without controversy.

3. Local records from that early time are scarce, but we do know that 15 years later, in 1785, soon after the end of the Revolutionary War, Orford's second schoolhouse was built on the northeast corner of "Orford Street", or what we call Main Street, and the road to Wentworth (now Rte. 25A), on what is now an empty, overgrown lot. The building you see here is not that schoolhouse (this shows a schoolhouse in Candia, N.H.), but it might have looked something like this – a small, single-story, very simple wooden structure. In any case, we know that the schoolhouse was in use for more than 40 years, until – as one former student recalled, it became "old, unpainted and weather-beaten".

4. This enlarged part of an oil painting from 1831 is the oldest image known to exist of an Orford school building. It was built in 1796 right out here at the south end of the town's West Common (just to the right of what is now Jeff and Amy Winagle's house). It was originally a private academy. But the school was not successful and was unable to obtain a charter from the New Hampshire legislature. After only two years, the building was turned over to the Town and became a public schoolhouse – which it continued to be until the building burned in about 1850.

5. As we know, Orford's population grew very rapidly from the time when the first permanent settlers arrived in 1765 until the 1830's, by which time its population had grown to almost 2,000 inhabitants – which is almost twice what Orford's population is today. Rich agricultural soils, virgin forests, ample waterpower, widespread sheep raising, and lively commerce generated by the well-traveled Grafton Turnpike and our early bridge crossing the Connecticut River, all contributed to this

dramatic period of population growth. Families began to spread out beyond the river and beyond Orfordville, establishing “hill farms” and small mills throughout the township, with settlements at Grimes Hill, Archertown, Quint Town, East Orford, and elsewhere.

6. One result of this growth – because of the time and difficulty involved for students to travel on foot or by traditional horsepower -- was a growing need for more schools in other parts of town. In 1805, the New Hampshire legislature authorized towns to form separate school districts within their borders. As a result, separate decentralized public school districts could be established with the residents of each separate district assuming responsibility for the running of their school and directed by so-called district “Prudential Committees”. Often at first, schools were held in people’s homes before schoolhouses could be built.

In 1807, in accordance with the new State law, Orford divided the town into nine separate school districts, as you see here. Then, as time went by and the town’s population continued to grow, parents petitioned the Selectmen to approve the creation of new school districts closer to their homes. Therefore, the number of one-room school districts in town continued to grow.

7. Here is the amazing new map which Emily Bryant has made and which you’ll want to use this afternoon on the tour. It’s in your handouts. In 1832, Orford’s “high water mark” for separate school districts was reached when its 16<sup>th</sup> school district was created in the area to the north and west of Upper Baker Pond along the Piermont Heights Road. Of special interest with regard to this school district is the fact that, roughly twenty years

later, in 1854, this district decided to officially join with the neighboring school district in the town of Piermont to form a new unified school district, which was called the “Union District”. Also, I want to mention that, when our Orford Historical Society group was working its way through piles of old records at the Selectboard’s office, we found evidence that, for at least two years, from 1842 to 1844, Orford had a 17<sup>th</sup> separate school district, which may also have been located in the northwest corner of the town. But please understand that Orford – in having 16 or even 17 separate school districts -- was not out of step with other towns in the area and across the state. During the same era, Lyme, for example, had 16 school districts, Piermont 13, Hanover 18, and Canaan 21! In fact, small one-room school districts existed all across the state. For example, in 1854 there were well over 2,000 separate school districts in New Hampshire.

And, speaking of the remarkable research efforts done for this program by Historical Society volunteers, I want to make and underscore a comment here. That is, it’s important to point out that we here in Orford are very fortunate to benefit not only from the extraordinary historical research work which was done in the past by Alice Doan Hodgson, the town’s long-time unofficial historian, but also from the fact that important and invaluable Town and school records dating back to at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century have been carefully saved and in many cases professionally conserved as a result of Town-funded efforts approved by voters at various Town Meetings.

Now, going back to that year 1832, when Orford’s population was approaching its all-time high and its school districts expanded to a total of sixteen, the number of enrolled students

rose to 660, which was equal to about one-third of the town's total population. Also, it is the largest number of students in Orford's history -- at least up to now. For the sake of comparison, today, in the year 2011, the total number of Orford students enrolled at Rivendell -- pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 -- is 185, which is only about one-sixth of Orford's current population. And the total number of students enrolled in Rivendell from all four member-towns is 519, as compared to 660 students from Orford alone in 1832. What this says, among other things, of course, is that in general people had much larger families in those days.

8. Now, let's talk about those old one-room schoolhouses. Five of them still exist in Orford and have been converted into private homes. And a sixth is now a library. Do you know where they are? If you go on our self-guided tour this afternoon, you'll be able to observe all of them. This was the so-called "Upper Street" or "Bickford School", built on the west side of Route 10 north of the village. It was constructed in 1846 of brick donated by a prosperous farmer up the road and replaced an earlier schoolhouse. It served as a school until 1921. As with this building, early schoolhouses often had double entrance doors, which it is understood were designated for boys on one side and girls on the other. 9. Here is that same former schoolhouse today, converted into a private home and still in use across the road from Cottonstone Farm. 10. This was what was called the "Orford Street School", built in 1829 on the southeast corner of the road to Orfordville (now Route 25A and Main Street) at the time when the new School District No. 14 was created. A school bell was located in the building's cupola, whose distinctive design was also seen on a number of other schoolhouses in town. Today, the brick building stands empty, but it is soon to acquire new life

and be restored as a locally owned café. 11. This was the “Halltown” or “Beantown” schoolhouse, named for local families in the area and located at the corner of Baker Road and what is now Route 25A, in the shadow of Mt. Cube. It was built in 1913 to replace an earlier schoolhouse on about the same site. This old glass-plate photograph really captures how remote some of our one-room schoolhouses were and how open the countryside was at that time (that’s Sunday Mountain in the background). 12. That same old school building now looks like this, as a private house. Also, there are two other old one-room schoolhouses still standing in Orford. One is at Davistown in East Orford, where later this afternoon docent Harry Pease, who lived in the converted schoolhouse from birth to age 18, will shed light on its fascinating history. And the other schoolhouse is located at Indian Pond Four Corners, where docent Emily Bryant will describe the evolution and special nature of schools at and near that site.

13. While we’re talking about one-room schoolhouses, here is an old view of the center of Orfordville, looking east, with the former Town Hall and former coffin factory on the left side of the picture, and the brick Orfordville schoolhouse on the right. It was built in 1832 to replace a log schoolhouse. Notice the bell tower, which was similar to the one we just saw down on Main Street. 14. Here’s a closer look at the old schoolhouse. After ownership of this building was transferred to the Town in 1900, it was used simultaneously for the Town Offices and for the new Orford Free Library. The building burned in 1933 but was reconstructed on the same site -- but without the cupola. 15. This impressive schoolhouse, for the Mill or Dublin District, stood on the south side of what is now called Archertown Road, west of the

intersection with Town Shed Road and opposite the house presently owned by Jude and Walter Parker. It presented us with a mystery because we didn't know when it was built or what happened to it after 1880, when a man named William Conant was its schoolmaster. Was it dismantled, or did it burn, or was it moved and transformed into a house? However, just this week, deep in those old records at the Town Offices building, we discovered that in 1894, after efforts to sell the building were not successful, a town committee was formed to "dispose" of it. But, beyond that, we still don't know.

16. Now, it's important for us to understand a very basic point about all these schools and school districts: that is, they operated with a great deal of independence. This was the case even though, starting in 1827 as the result of a State law, each town was obliged to have a Supervising School Committee with responsibility for reporting on enrollment, teachers' effectiveness, and the like. As Adair Mulligan writes in her wonderful new booklet about the historic schools of Lyme, "For nearly a century, the district school system was a model of local control. Each school was built, funded, and managed by the district's voters, who hired the teacher, set the school calendar, supplied the firewood, dropped in to observe, and celebrated their children's progress and performances." The "principal items of business [at their district meetings] were to figure out which neighbor would provide 'good clean hardwood', and who posted the lowest bid to provide the teacher's room and board. Voters often deferred decisions on repairs, sometimes for decades." In 1915, William Conant, an Orford resident who, as I just mentioned, had been the teacher at the Mill District school, wrote the following in an account of Orford history: "Each [district] was a little republic in itself which elected officers, hired teachers, and voted taxes to be



levied by the selectmen for expenses and building schoolhouses. They often had their own political questions which occasioned intense feeling and exciting meetings.” Does that sound at all familiar to you folks?

17. The schoolhouses themselves were generally small, rectangular buildings with one large room and a small vestibule or anteroom in front for coats and storage. Students sat on benches or at double desks. There were outdoor privies and drinking water came from a container with a common dipper. Children of all ages, from four to twenty, could attend and until the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were not categorized by grades. Instead, the teacher, sometimes assisted by older children, worked with each student at his or her own pace. There were no “snow days” and children walked to school. There were no organized sports. The school calendar varied; in the early days there were generally two terms in a school year, summer and winter, each 3 – 4 months long. Later on, there were three terms (fall, winter, and summer). It’s interesting to think about the total length of the school year in those days: in 1871, for example, the average length of the school year for Orford’s 14 schools was only 22 weeks. That compares to a 36-week school year for the Rivendell School District in 2011 - 2012.

The subjects taught in these schools were specified by State law and consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography. However, female teachers (“school mistresses”) were not obliged to teach arithmetic or geography. I’m not going to comment on that.

Today, we still occasionally hear people refer with nostalgia to the good old days of “the little red schoolhouse”, where, they say, New England tradition counted for something and where children learned their three R’s without frills or pampering, and got a basic education that served them well for the rest of their lives. However, I regret to report that this idyllic version of “the little red schoolhouse” is, in fact, oftentimes little more than a romantic myth.

18. Numerous first-hand accounts and official reports from the 19<sup>th</sup> century record that in New Hampshire and in other New England states poorly equipped, run-down school buildings and inadequate instruction were the rule rather than the exception. Schools often were crowded, unpainted and poorly heated, with insufficient ventilation and lighting. Seating was uncomfortable and, as every boy in those days carried a penknife and whittled whenever he got a chance, the available desks usually were rough and scarred with carvings. Teachers often were very young and had little training. And -- you’ll not be surprised to hear -- taxpayers often were not inclined to pay much for teachers’ salaries.

It’s clear that at least some of Orford’s numerous district schools were not immune to these problems. As we know, the population of Orford, along with that of other farming communities in this area, began a long decline, starting in the late 1830s. It was caused initially by a sudden drop in wool prices and then, over the longer term, by the attractiveness of abundant rich farmland in the Midwest and by steady-paying industrial jobs in New England’s mill towns. The Civil War also accelerated this trend. As for schools, the trend was reflected in Orford by a

steady decline in the total number of enrolled students during those years. For example, from the high point of 660 students in 1832, the total number of students dropped by more than half during the next thirty years to 303 in 1862.

Therefore, it's not surprising that, as the number of students attending many of Orford's one-room schoolhouses declined, there was less incentive to pay for building repairs, books, and even teachers. And each school was essentially self-financed by district taxpayers. There was virtually no state financial support and only small annual payments from the Selectboard which came from dog-license fees and from rents paid on certain Town-owned property which were apportioned on the basis of student enrollment.

By the late 1830s, a school reform movement had begun to emerge all across New England in response to widespread and serious problems, including illiteracy among school-age children and high absenteeism. In New Hampshire, the state government began to take official interest in public education in the 1840's. A very important step was taken in 1846 when the New Hampshire legislature created the position of State Commissioner of Common Schools, which in turn began efforts to examine school performance, introduce recommended standards for instruction and school building design, and enhance teacher training.

During our research for today's program, we found confirmation that there must have been serious shortcomings in a number of district schools in Orford just before the start of the Civil War. For example, in the Annual Report for 1860 of the New Hampshire State Board of Education, a highly detailed inspection

account includes the finding that, among Orford's 15 separate school districts at that time, there were eight schoolhouses judged to be "unfit for use". Eight out of 15, in comparison to four unfit schoolhouses in Hanover and also in Lebanon, three in Lyme, and only one in Piermont. The narrative portion of this inspectors' report regarding Orford, in lofty but pointed terms, is very critical, stating that much better care was being given to Orford's barns and private houses than to its country school-houses and parsonages. I'll quote here from the report's opening paragraph to give you the full flavor: "Now the work of improvement must rest chiefly with you, citizens. We yet have confidence in New-England men, and women, too. We believe, if you will but devote to this matter a tithe of the intelligence and enterprise which you throw into your business concerns, you would soon have schools that you would be proud of, and of which it would not be safe for your committee to render an unfavorable report." Wow! They didn't mince words, did they?

19. Why are we now showing you this old image of a pair of horses pulling a wagon? Because this actually was the "school bus" which transported students, rain or shine, to the Halltown District schoolhouse out at the foot of Mt. Cube. There are seven students sitting in the back, behind Mr. Moses Bean, the long-time bus driver. [*This is at the Marston Stock Farm and Gladys Huckins is the girl in the middle.*] This old photo again exemplifies the hardships, but also in some way the memorable experiences students had in attending Orford's one-room schoolhouses spread out all across the town.

20. Now, we need to explain what happened with our schools toward the end of the 1800s – a period we'll call

“consolidation”. To summarize, and as is dramatically shown by this graph, starting in about 1830, Orford’s population declined steadily. 21. And so did the number of students, as shown by the pink line on this graph. The number of students, or “scholars” as they were called in those days, is represented by the dark blue line on the chart. In the 1820s, the average number of students per school was over 50; by the mid-1880s, the average was under 20. And yet, despite a recommendation made as early as 1851 by the town’s Supervising School Committee to reduce the number of school districts, in 1868 there were still 15 separate school districts in town, each with its separate school building. That was only one less district than 35 years before, in the 1830s, when Orford’s population was at its highest.

From our perspective, it seems clear that many Orford residents were very reluctant to change the decentralized, one-room school system that had been in place since the town’s early years. And, in a way, it’s understandable. The one-room schoolhouses, although often needing repair, were relatively close to their homes, were “a known quantity” where in many cases the parents themselves had gone to school, and -- above all -- were still directly governed by the voters in their separate districts.

However, when we look at the broader picture, as I mentioned earlier, efforts to reform public education in New Hampshire had been underway since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This had come to include the establishment of graded classes, improved teacher training, public high schools, and a redirection away from the traditional rural one-room school system. Increasingly, it was recognized that the decentralized district system no longer made sense. While a community that

had many small schoolhouses may have provided equal physical access to education, the cost of duplicating all those facilities across the town was excessive. In Orford's case, 15 small schoolhouses, with dwindling numbers of students, instead of two or three graded schools, meant that the money available for buildings, supplies, and teacher salaries had to be spread much thinner.

In 1885, the New Hampshire legislature took the bull by the horns and, in a major shift away from "local control", enacted a law requiring all independent school districts within each town to be consolidated into one unified School District. After this ruling from Concord, the school system in Orford – which still had 14 separate school districts at the time -- began a period of consolidation and major change. But, as you can well imagine, historical records show there was resistance and controversy here; those changes did not come easily to Orford. A study was initiated here in 1886 – the year after the law was enacted -- to determine how the number of Orford's schools could best be reduced and efficiency increased. But only a year later the report for the school year 1887-88 expressed concern that numbers of students were not attending any schools and attributed the problem not only to the indifference of parents but also to "a sort of boycott of the new school law". Nevertheless, Orford's one-room schoolhouses began to be closed and the buildings sold off. In 1897 alone, five one-room schoolhouses were sold.

22. This group of students, photographed in the 1890's in front of what was the Mt. Cube Grange building in Orfordville, reflects a different kind of problem. In the late 1880's and 1890's, the number of students outgrew the capacity of Orfordville's

brick one-room schoolhouse, which no doubt was a reflection of the lively commerce and manufacturing then occurring in that part of town. So the problem was resolved by renting the Grange Hall, which became a grammar school for the older students for a number of years.

23. A very important step in the consolidation of the town's schools was taken by the decision to construct an up-to-date, two-story school building in downtown Orfordville, which is shown here under construction in 1898. Although a contemporary newspaper article reported that the Town Meeting at which the decision was reached was "sharply divided", the building was completed in 1899 at a total cost of \$2,000. It was paid off in one year, along with the \$2,000 cost of buying the Orford Academy building, by increasing the town's tax rate by \$1.00.

24. Here is the new school building -- flying a big American flag out in front -- soon after it was completed. It continued to be used as a grammar school for almost 100 years -- until 1990, and soon after that it was converted to the Town Offices building. 25. This photo, from 1906, shows very well behaved looking children in one of the new classrooms. On the wall in the back is a framed photograph of then President Teddy Roosevelt.

26. Now, for just a moment, let's go back in time to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to talk about another interesting and important chapter in the story of education in Orford, namely, the Orford Academy. In 1850, three influential Orford residents -- Ebenezer Strong, John Rogers, and Daniel Tillotson -- obtained the approval of the New Hampshire legislature to establish a new, private school to be called the Orford Academy. *[A charter had been obtained in 1836 but apparently never fulfilled and it was*

*'renewed' in 1850.]* As you see here in this contemporary etching, by 1851 the school's large, handsome three-story brick building was constructed on two acres of land at the southern end of Orford's Ridge – where it still stands today. The building's third floor, with eleven small rooms, was designated as a boy's dormitory, and the building to the right in this etching, built in 1855, was the residence for the headmaster as well as quarters for teachers and female boarding students. The Academy was part of a movement of privately funded "middle schools" which had begun to appear in New England around the time of the Revolutionary War. Often these schools educated students who aspired to go on to college to become clergy, lawyers, physicians, and other professional gentlemen. Among the earliest were Philips Andover in Massachusetts and Philips Exeter in New Hampshire. Others, including Kimball Union in Meriden, came later. 27 Here's a rare and very early photograph of the Orford Academy. It opened in 1851 with nine teachers and 167 students (94 boys and 73 girls). What is especially interesting -- even in today's Rivendell context – is that the school represented an impressive effort 160 years ago to create a high-quality regional academic institution. One of its catalogs from the early 1850s shows that the Academy, which had three grades, included students from Orford, 25 from Fairlee, and others from towns in both New Hampshire and Vermont, including Lyme, Piermont, Wentworth, Haverhill, Bath, Whitefield, Bradford, Thetford, and Cavendish. And in the following year, there also were 12 students from Massachusetts.

Sadly, however, the Orford Academy had a short life. By 1865, less than 15 years after it began, it was forced to suspend operations. And, after several unsuccessful attempts to restart, its



doors closed in 1871. Then, as far as we can tell, for about 20 years, the large building stood unused. 28. However, by the early 1890s, arrangements were made with Orford's new town-wide school board to conduct public school classes on the building's first floor. This photograph, taken in 1893, shows a grammar school class of 20 students, plus a teacher on the far right, out in front of the Academy building. Then, in 1898, the proprietors of the Orford Academy Corporation sold the building to the Town for its continued use as a two-room public grammar school.

In the meantime, work continued in Orford to consolidate the town's public schools in accordance with the new state law. In 1887, the numerous individual districts were replaced by a single town-wide School District. By 1901, only six one-room schoolhouses still were operating, including those at Indian Pond/Four Corners and at Davistown in East Orford. But long distances and local concerns continued to affect consolidation decisions, as shown by the fact that in 1913 a one-room school was reopened at Halltown in the newly constructed building you see pictured on the cover of today's handout. Eventually, it was not until June of 1935 that Orford's last two remaining one-room schoolhouses -- at Halltown on the western slope of Mt. Cube and at Davistown in East Orford -- finally closed their doors for good.

29. As to the question of a high school for Orford, by at least the late 1890's, urgings to establish our own high school began to appear in annual School District reports. Meanwhile, tuitions were paid by the Town, and funded by Orford's taxpayers, to enable some Orford students to attend public high schools and private academies in other towns. In 1905, for example, such

tutions were paid for eleven students, six of whom went to Kimball Union Academy in Meriden. Then, at long last, in 1926, the Orford High School was started as the result of a special arrangement – actually the first of such in New Hampshire – with Plymouth Normal School (later Plymouth State Teachers College and now Plymouth State University) whereby Orford’s teaching staff consisted primarily of Plymouth students, called “cadets”, who were in training to become high school teachers. Using the second floor of the Academy building, the staff was directed by the venerable Gladys P. Twitchell, who served as headmaster from 1926 until 1944 and is still remembered with great respect and affection.

The photo you’ve been looking at shows the High School baseball team in the early 1930’s, when it was among the best in the state for a school of its size. 30. And here’s the graduating class of 1932. Orford High School began with only sophomores and freshmen and a total enrollment of 18. Five members of its first graduating class in 1929 were – shades of Rivendell -- from Fairlee. By the mid-1930’s enrollment had grown to some 90 students from towns on both sides of the Connecticut River.

31. The High School concluded its operations at the end of June, 2000, when Rivendell Interstate School District assumed responsibility for education and for ownership of the Academy building. But the building continued to serve for high school classes until March 7, 2002 – when this photo was taken; it was the last day – up to now -- of student use of the building.

Do you know that Orford also was the home of another private school and that it actually operated successfully for twice

as long as the Orford Academy? This was the Boynton School near Grimes Hill Road, which was founded and led by the multi-talented Arthur Boynton from 1965 through 1996. The school's aim was to demonstrate that a good education needn't be expensive and that learning is a life-long pursuit. Students from around the globe, ranging in age from 11 to 20, did their own cooking and cleaning and each day did farm work, as well. Its graduates today include CEO's, blacksmiths, doctors, attorneys, farmers, and professors. There is more information about this unusual school in our exhibit today.

32. And now in closing, I want to share with you some recollections and thoughts about what one-room schoolhouse learning was like from our cherished Orford resident, Ruth Ladd Brown. Ruth, who is with us here today, was born and raised "out around the mountain" – as she puts it – in East Orford. All of Ruth's schooling took place in the one-room schoolhouse at Davistown until 1934, when she started High School way over here on "The Street". Then, after teacher training at Plymouth State Teachers College, Ruth became a beloved member of the staff at the Ray Elementary School in Hanover, where she taught for 37 years.

The photograph here of eight students and their teacher at the Davistown schoolhouse was taken on Memorial Day in 1928, which explains all the American flags. Ruth is the blonde-headed girl in front, second from the left.

Ruth describes a "multi-aged atmosphere" at the one-room schoolhouse at Davistown, in which each student progressed on their own and learned by doing. Often with geography and

history, she recalls, all grades, first through eighth, studied the same unit. For example, she wrote, when we learned about Eskimos we built an igloo where we ate our lunches. When we studied the Indians we pretended to hunt for wild animals by chasing Coony rabbits out back in the swamp with hand made bows and arrows. In the spring the boys fished for trout in the brook by the school and ran down to my mother's with them. She cooked them for their lunch. We had a wood stove. The children in the rows nearest were sweating and others by the windows were freezing. For a while we were blessed with "practice teachers" from Plymouth Normal School, a new one every 18 weeks. Because of them, I knew from very early on that I'd be a teacher. They were young, eager and full of new ideas; they brought the outside world to us and to the entire community.

We loved school! It was our social life plus the neighborhood's too, with Halloween and Christmas parties for parents and everyone else. When the school finally closed (there were only nine students left), it was a sad time because never again was there a place for the community to socialize.

Ruth recalled: When I received my Teachers College diploma, I was bursting with happiness. My first thought was, "Now I can help bring the world through learning to children as my teachers did for me. As the years flew by, I realized that my world was being enhanced and enriched by the children. And that is what education is all about. People and children bonding in communities for the purpose of learning and contributing to each other and the future.

And now, before we describe the self-guided tour, I want to thank everyone who has helped to create this program and done so much work, starting with Ann Green, whose idea it was to do this subject and who chaired the Working Group. Also Dave Bischoff, Emily Bryant, Ted Cooley, Eva Daniels, Harry Pease, Gordon Christie-Maples, Pat Bertozzi-Buck, Ella Tobleman, Craig Tomlinson, Carol Boynton, and others. And special thanks go to those who agreed to be interviewed on tape: Ruth Ladd Brown, Helen Huckins Marsh, Dorothy Baker Pierson, Horton Washburn, and Laura Washburn Verry. Also, I want to thank the Sixth Graders from Samuel Morey School who are helping us here today.

\* Indicates PowerPoint image