

TOPIC: Compare Life Now to 100 Years Ago – Ms. Su’s Schoolhouse

Imagine going to a one-room schoolhouse instead of the school you go to today! These are pictures of Ms. Su’s Schoolhouse that is in the museum.



This schoolhouse is built to represent one from 1909. There would be one teacher for all the students who could range in age from all elementary grades up through 6 to 13 years. The younger students would sit up front near the teacher and the older ones would sit in the back. Because of farm life and the work that needed to be done on the farm, as many as one-third of eligible students in Loudoun County did not attend school. It wasn’t until 1922 that attendance became mandatory in Virginia.

In Virginia, there were separate one room schoolhouses for African American Children. This continued until 1954 when the Supreme Court mandated desegregation.

The teacher would oftentimes be a former student of the one-room schoolhouse and most likely a female. The teacher would have to teach all the subjects to everyone. The older children would often help the younger children with their work, which reinforced what they had already learned. The most common teaching tool was the *McGuffey Readers* and individual slate boards.

To see a McGuffey Reader: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14640/14640-pdf.pdf>

The subjects taught were:

- **Arithmetic:** many textbooks included arithmetic lessons that involved farm problems, because the children would most likely come across them at some point in their lives and would need to know how to do them. The children would use slate boards and chalk at their desk.
- **Spelling:** Every child would have been given a list of spelling words taken from the McGuffey Eclectic Speller appropriate to each child.
- **Penmanship:** Penmanship was emphasized in the one room schoolhouse setting. People believed it was very important to have children to have good handwriting because poor handwriting made a bad impression on those who read what the children had written. Many times, children used pen and ink from an inkwell to learn proper handwriting before moving on to handwriting with a fountain pen (patented in 1884 and available in the 1900s).

A typical school day was 9am to 4pm with afternoon recesses of 15 minutes, each and an hour for lunch. The older students were given the responsibility of bringing in water, carry in coal or wood for the stove. The younger students would be given chores according to their size and gender such as cleaning the chalkboard, taking the erasers outside for dusting plus other duties that they were capable of doing. This is a picture of the kerosene stove from 1908 that is located in the schoolhouse.



During the winter months, the teacher would get to school early and get a fire started in the potbelly stove, so that the building would be warm for the students. Sometimes, the teacher would assign this chore to a student who would have to come in early on a particular day.

On many occasions, the teacher would prepare a hot, noon meal on top of the stove, usually consisting of soup or stew of some kind. Oftentimes, students would bring produce from home to be used in the stew or soup for lunch.

Transportation for children who lived too far to walk was often provided by horse-drawn wagons or a student might ride a horse. In more recent times, students rode bicycles.

Let's take a closer look at some of the items in the schoolhouse by looking at these pictures.



Do you see the teachers desk in the middle of the front of the room. Look at the close up photo of the pictures above the chalkboard. The picture on the left is of President Howard Taft (he was President in 1909). The picture in the middle is a class picture. The picture on the right is Charles Swanson who was Governor of Virginia from 1906 to 1910.



The flag and map would also have been in a one room schoolhouse. This particular map is from 1908.

Use the next page to list out what is the same in the 1909 schoolhouse and your school and what is different between the two different schools.



Use the bottom T-Chart to compare and contrast what life was like in a 1909 One-Room Schoolhouse to the school you attend today. There are some features listed to get you started and one example. You can keep adding!

Ms. Su's Schoolhouse from 1909	FEATURE	Your School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually former student of that school 	Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually studied at another school
	Students	
	Transportation	
	Items Inside School	
	Subjects	

