

Schoolhouse #4 - Abel Road History

By Karla MacLeod

The town of Rindge had eleven schoolhouses in use between the years of 1805 and 1820. The population of the town peaked in 1820 at 1298. It would decline from this point until it recovered this population in 1970. In 1821, schoolhouse #12 was built on what is presently Abel Road to accommodate the growing population. This was a large district carved out of the original 4th and 8th Districts. The inhabitants in the district included Eliphaz Allen, Nathan Underwood, Peter Howe, Samuel Tarbell, Thomas Tarbell, Isaac Learned, John Richards, Jr., Josiah Pierce, and Nathan Derby Jr.

In 1848, the town was redistricted and “the boundaries were considerably disturbed, as well as some of the inhabitants,” according to Ezra Stearns in his History of Rindge. At this time, School District 12 was reduced in area and became School District 4.

The first documented school records in 1851 list John Smith as the head of the Prudential Committee (oversaw individual schools) for School District #4. There were a total of 38 scholars, 17 females and 21 males. Wages per month were \$7 for the 10 week summer term and \$18 for the 7 week Winter term. Miss L. Towne taught the Summer session and Mr. Chadwick the Winter term. Total money appropriated was \$27 for the Summer and \$45.83 for the Winter, making a grand total of \$72.83 for the year.

In 1853, students as young as four attended the school. Ezekiel Cudworth was the head of the Prudential Committee. In his report he stated that “the house is unfit for the use to which it has been put for 30 years, and having served its generation ought to be allowed to rest. It should be added that subject of a new house is under consideration.”

At this time the books used in the school were: The Bible, Leonards North American Spelling Book, Towns Series of Reading Books, Adam Arithmetic, Colburn’s Mental Arithmetic, Weld’s New Grammar, Mitchell’s Geographies, Goodrich’s History of the U.S., Cutter’s Physiology, and Webster’s Series of Dictionary.

In 1855, Miss C. A. Jewett, the teacher of the Winter term , was ”induced to resign her charge at the end of four weeks.” She was eventually replaced by T.A Ranson. Faxon Rice in his Prudential Committee Report stated that ”the circumstances of the Winter term must have had an injurious influence on the prosperity of the school. Nothing is needed here but a well constructed house, and a waking up among people to the importance of taking care of the mental and moral training of their children.”

The records for 1857 indicate that a new and pleasant house had been in use for three terms.

In 1862, the student population of School District #4 was 35 for the Summer term and 42 for the Winter Session. In 1864, the “prevalence of an alarming epidemic in the district, brought the Winter term to a premature close without examination.”

By 1872, the District was down to 15-17 students. In 1876 there was no Summer term and only 11 students in the Winter term. By 1877 there was talk of combining District 4 and District 7. In 1878 the Summer term had only four students from one family. The 13 children of Moses Cudworth kept the school viable for many years. Moses Cudworth at one point also owned the Half-way House on Mt. Monadnock. There were nine scholars in the Winter Session but some came from other districts.

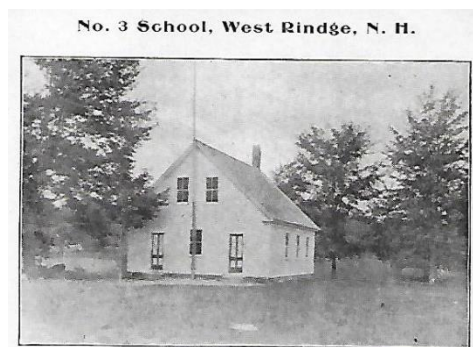
In the 1880's the schoolhouse had fallen into disrepair. In 1888, Schoolhouse #4 and Schoolhouse #8 were repaired. "The roofs had been neglected so long that the rain came through, so that the scholars were obliged to move from their seats. The town did not appropriate money for the repair, so it was taken out of school money. In 1892, repairs to schoolhouse s #4 and #5 amounted to \$463.44.

In 1900, the last year for Schoolhouse #4, all schools in town except #4, had a 30 week session. Mabel Danforth taught 15 pupils for 9 1/5 weeks in the Fall term. Her wages were \$28. There were 28 visits by parents and others. There were two instances of tardiness and perfect attendance was awarded to Eva Bean and Wilfred Crotto. In the previous year, perfect attendance was awarded to Delcie D. Bean* in the Winter term. For the rest of the year and many years to follow, students were transported to Schoolhouse #3 on Mountain Rd.

Two teachers at Schoolhouse #4 later became librarians at Ingalls Memorial Library: Emma Leighton, the first librarian and later, Ella Brigham. Miss Leighton's teaching certificate can be viewed at the Rindge Museum.

It was reported in 1904 that three unused schoolhouses "have had to have the windows boarded up at considerable expense, because they had been broken into and a great deal of damage done. We hope that was the work of strangers." Diamond Match was paid \$2.80 for lumber for repairs to Schoolhouse # 4 and Walter Hart was paid \$1.50 for labor.

Schoolhouse #4 was sold to Susan Dickinson of Fitzwilliam in 1916 for \$75.



When it was closed, Schoolhouse #4 students were transported to Schoolhouse #3, shown above.

*Delcie D. Bean would become the founder of a match making company in the area.

Note: all information contained in this report was obtained from Stearns History of Rindge, 1874; Town on the Border, 1988 and Rindge School Reports from 1851 to 1916.