

Chapter 11

School Days in Monmouth

After the American Revolution the population of Shrewsbury, which encompassed all of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, continued to expand. By 1810 there were almost four thousand people in the area, but few schools to educate the children. Most people were illiterate, barely able to read or write. Many families owned one book, the bible. Some could read the almanac for information on planting crops, remedies for sick animals, names of places and bits of wisdom. Education was under the authority of religious sects, which taught moral lessons of gratitude, forgiveness, gentleness, temper, order and use of time.

Well-to-do families hired private tutors or sent their children to England for an education. There were small tuition schools where the school-master was paid directly by the parents and a few free schools. There were schools in Shrewsbury, Middletown, Freehold, Englishtown and Allentown. Written in the 1825 Rules and Regulations the school policy states that students shall recite three lessons in spelling, ciphering, and reading every half-day. Students shall keep their copybooks neat and clean and shall know the rules of arithmetic. Teachers may not engage in spirituous liquors while engaged in school.

When Isaac was growing up in Eatontown village schools were located in churches or homes where children were taught reading, spelling and enough to count change. The first formal school was built by the Friends of Shrewsbury Meeting, (the Quakers) in 1806 and called the Pleasant Hill Academy, because it was built on a hill north of the village.

Seth Lippincott lived at the academy and boarded students in his house until 1825 when the academy was abandoned until another school opened in 1860. A quarter of a mile from the village a schoolhouse was built on land donated by Thomas White. Joseph Wardell, the teacher, stayed until it closed in 1835.

Each religious group established schools to pass religious and moral standards to the next generation. In 1838, the Presbyterians built a school in Eatontown Village. Some teachers formed their own schools and charged tuition of \$2.00 per quarter for each child attending, which was mostly boys.

Religious groups were more comfortable with education under their control. In 1835 Dutch families of Colts Neck having twenty dwelling, decided to establish schools that would be supported by all the people in the area. This idea conflicted with the English aristocratic system, which expected parents to pay for education, but giving public support for the poor.

Dutch and English Puritans from New England believed that the entire community needed to support schools, since an educated public was beneficial to all of society. The Scot-Irish believed in universal education, but under the control of the church. Churches provided the facility, teachers and material.

Quakers became an obstacle to public education, believing in separateness of different religious groups. A group, called Friends of Education, campaigned to establish schools, secure teachers and organize the public in favor of better laws for education. Church leaders campaigned for free public education as a right for all children and as a necessary foundation for a democratic government.

By 1815, Freehold had a boys' high school, called the Freehold Academy, staffed by Episcopal clergymen. The tuition was \$2.00 per quarter and another .40 cents for arithmetic. In 1820, a law passed by the New Jersey Legislature authorized townships to raise money for school purposes.

It was discovered that girls could learn multiplication facts, do division, and memorize details of geography. The basement of the Masonic Hall in Eatontown was used as a school in 1824. In 1828, the first Appropriation Act to establish common schools was passed. Money was distributed around the counties on the basis of their tax ratables. By 1830, New Jersey population was 320,000. Laws were amended to provide a system of common schools by the state. By 1838, half the children attended school part of the year.

Teachers, most of whom were Irish men, were paid about \$300.00 per year. Women were considered inadequate in education and too weak to wield the rod on unruly students. The first women teachers appeared in 1850.

A 1854 deed lists Isaac R. Richardson, William Richardson and Lorenzo Schanck, as trustees to build a schoolhouse for colored children on one-quarter acre of land on the north side of the road to Shark River in district 14, Eatontown. This was the Pine Grove School. Eatontown built the Locust Grove one-room schoolhouse on South Street. The

school house was lighted by oil lamps and heated by a coal stove. Drinking water was kept in a pail by the entrance and all students drank out of the same cup.

Benches and desks were bolted to the floor. Two head outhouses were behind the school. The school on Church Street was used for colored children. There was no transportation or lunch provided for students. Students began the day reading the bible. Students were scored on report cards in reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling geography, drawing, physical education and deportment (attitude).

In 1864, a report from the county superintendent complained about the lack of interest from parents, irregularity of student attendance, inefficiency of teachers, constantly changing textbooks and miserable conditions of schoolhouses. By 1866, laws repealed the distribution of public money to religious denominations, making all public monies the exclusive use of public schools.

In 1868, the compulsory attendance law made free public education available to all children. A commissioner of education was appointed and a fund established that was supported by the state. The state paid \$1.33 per child per quarter for tuition. Children attended school for six months until they were needed on the farms to plant and harvest crops during the growing season. Since there was little money in circulation, doctors, ministers, teachers and laborers were paid in farm produce, corn, flax and homemade goods.

In 1875, a home for friendless children (orphans) opened on Broad Street in Eatontown. Class size had increased to forty-six pupils per class. Separate schools for gender were founded on separate floors of buildings. Other schools provided different levels of learning by divided the sexes. The first attempt to separate students based on

age was in 1867 by a graduate of Rutgers College, R. Van Dyke Reid. He abolished corporal punishment and stopped all beatings of students.

Schools were originally barns or blacksmith shops renovated for education. Until 1850s the village barber or blacksmith served as the dentist in shore communities. To house a growing population Red Bank tried to build a high school in 1895 but the residents voted it down.

The first school in Long Branch dates back to 1812 when a building one-mile east of Branchburg was constructed on Cedar Avenue. By 1840, the original school was built on Deal Turnpike and there was a private school on Main Street. Residents raised a subscription (referendum) to build a schoolhouse at the corner of Broadway and Academy Alley. In 1848, North Long Branch built a school on the road to Raccoon Island. A school costing \$2000 was built for minority children in 1884 on Brook Street.

The African-American children of Tinton Falls attended a school on Wayside Road in Pine Brook until about 1947 when the town eliminated segregated schools and assigned all students to the Tinton Falls School and Vail Homes School in Shrewsbury Township, NJ.



**Richardson / Revey Family Reunion, 1953 at Sandhill,
New Jersey**