

MEMORIES OF DAYS PAST

I was born in Gilmanton, went to school there, lived at home and taught in Gilmanton all but three of my thirty-nine years of teaching. Those three I taught just across the state border in Maine. Perhaps it is because of ripe old age of 91 that I can't remember any special highlights or perhaps it is because I have been retired n long and have been so active in town and church affairs these past 21 years.

There has been such a sameness in my life that one day was a continuation of yesterday and tomorrow an extension of today. But I was never bored — just weary enough at the end of the school day to be glad to go home, just as eager in the morning to get back to school. School was my life!

At the turn of the century Gilmanton held school when it was most convenient to get the children there. The first year I taught (age 16) there were two terms, a summer term of ten weeks and a winter term of eight.

I had completed three years at Gilmanton Academy and accepted the summer term at \$5 a week. In the fall I went back to the Academy but did not graduate as I was offered a school for the winter term at \$5.50 a week. I thought that was wonderful, as did my parents. My teaching career was on its way.

My first day would have been a disaster had it not been for one tall boy. When it was time for the Lord's Prayer, my mind went blank. I repeated the words of that boy and became composed.

I lived at home and drove a horse and wagon for about three miles. As were all country school teachers I was the janitor unless I hired an older boy at twenty-five cents a week. I carried wood from home for heating the school, which started at nine and closed at four. I wonder now how we could see on winter days as there was no way to illuminate the schoolroom. We got water from neighbors; however at my first school we walked down a hill, across a pasture to a spring, and carried the water back.

There were no hot lunches provided until the 1940's, but we had one hot food every day. I made a chowder at home or parents sent food, never failing to take their turns. We often baked potatoes in the hot ashes. The older girls and I cleaned up — not a stupendous job as that first year I had only six children.

With consolidation of schools came superintendents. With superintendents came stone water jars with spigots, and gone was the water pail and communal dipper.

As I look back, I cannot recall any special discipline problems. I remember telling one mother, "I can always get along with the children, but *damn* the parents." I do recollect a boy who bought a cigar at the village store, then smoked it in the school basement. After giving him a scolding, I went to the store and really lit into the clerk.

Maybe I had discipline problems and didn't know it. I do know I loved every one of my children, every day of my teaching and all of my teaching years.

— Florence M. Durgin, Gilmanton (as told to Lillian Beckley)