

Spring 2025 Museum Musings

By Kathleen Lister

Do you have a memory tucked away from your school days of a funny incident, a sad event, or something that made such an impression on you that it has made a difference in your life? Read below as former teachers and students respond to a survey asking that very question!

* I'll never forget that summer day in 1964 while walking in downtown Fredericton, when a favourite teacher deliberately approached me and complimented me on my matriculation results. That memory reminds me of the impact a caring teacher can have long after school days are behind us.

* I remember when two of the older boys in our one-room school stole the teacher's strap and nailed it to a tree!

* My first teaching assignment was at a one-room school. There was no electricity or running water in the schoolhouse so the bathroom was the little wooden building out back. The students nicknamed it "The Biffy".

* I recall the time we stuffed the teacher's handbell with tissue so that the next time she would use the bell to get our attention, it wouldn't ring. I can still see the look on her face!

* In grade one I watched in tears as my friend was being strapped for something she didn't do. I knew the guilty one but was too frightened to tell the teacher. I always wished I had been braver and had tattled but we were too intimidated.

* My first school was a one-room school in the country. The required dress code was either a dress or a skirt. So, in the winter time we wore long johns and ski pants but wore a dress over them to hide them!

* I remember being thankful when someone in our family received a box of chocolates for Christmas so that I could use the box each day to carry my lunch to school.

* A grade 6 student was anxiously telling me about his fishing plan with his father. I was surprised to find on my desk the next day a very well-wrapped trout - a gift from the young fisherman!

* Our teacher used to come outside to the playground and play ball with us.

* My Grade 3 teacher in St. John's, Nfld. made our class memorize a poem every week, making most students so aggrieved but opening up for me a whole new world of beautiful words and imagery; poets like Walter de la Mere and Wordsworth and Louis Stevenson and Emily Dickinson. I can still recite many of the poems to this day, and she instilled in me a love of words and writing, which fills a great part of my day, all these years later!

* Our teacher often made fudge for her students but it was so hard we used it to play foot hockey - but only behind her back because we liked her and didn't want to hurt her feelings.

* I remember "falling in love" with my Grade 3 teacher but, alas, the feeling was not mutual.

- * When I was in grade 8, our Literature teacher each day would read to our class the next few pages of "Anne of Green Gables". This inspired me to read further into the L. M. Montgomery series and also to delve into other novels for a lifetime of reading enjoyment.
- * It was just after WW2 and the war had left impressions on our young minds. Each morning, we Grade 1 students in our New Zealand school lined up like little soldiers and marched in step to music down the hall on the way to our classroom.
- * In our grade one reading class, if we made a mistake while reading aloud, we were strapped on the hands. Sometimes by the end of the class my hands were red and swollen. I mustn't have been too severely damaged as I went on to become a teacher!
- * Happiness was when my mother said that I could eat in our Altadena, California school cafeteria on Hamburger Tuesday instead of carrying my lunch in a lunch pail.
- * I recall a teacher becoming so frustrated that he punched a hole in the blackboard! Ouch!
- * Bertha was a Grade 1 student in our one-room school who came from a very poor socio-economic home and had language that would make a sailor blush. I noticed that someone had placed a cucumber on my desk and I asked, "Oh, who brought me the nice big cucumber?" and Bertha remarked, "I'm damn sure I didn't!"
- * In grade one the teacher made us place our hands on our desks so that she could inspect our fingernails.
- * I recall receiving a "strapping" from my teacher but she was the only one who cried.
- * What fun our Drama Club had performing in the play "Who Put the Overalls in Mrs. Murphy's Chowder?!"
- * During noon hour in the winter we students would skate on the near-by outdoor rink.
- * I remember in the 1950's a rule in our girls' basketball games which stated only TWO dribbles were allowed to be bounced, then the ball had to be passed to another player or be aimed at the basket.
- * A friend of mine worked at a restaurant. Each morning before starting her daily schedule, she would go to the local school and help serve breakfast to the students. One morning a little boy asked her, "Could I have another slice of bread? I don't have anything to eat at lunch time." Later, arriving at the restaurant, who did my friend see sitting at a table, scratching lottery tickets and smoking cigarettes but the mother of that same little boy!!
- * In grade 8 the boy behind me dunked my pigtails into the ink well.
- * I remember my grandmother telling me that when she went to a one-room school, their drinking water was kept in a bucket and they all took turns drinking the water from a long-handled dipper.
- * I had just arrived home from my first day in Grade 1. My mother asked, "Well, how was your first day at school?" and I replied, "I had everything right so I don't have to go back!"

WE NEVER KNOW THE TRUE VALUE OF A MOMENT UNTIL IT BECOMES A MEMORY.