

Our One-room Schools Where Are They Now?

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In New Brunswick's pioneer days, children received very little education. The church provided rudimentary instruction and most homes had a Bible which was read and reread. However, in life's on-going struggle, the children worked long hours assisting with daily chores; thus, little attention was given to education.

By 1802 change was in the air. The Parish Schools Act was passed, granting the sum of 10 pounds to each NB parish to assist in the establishment of schools. Little one-room schools began to appear in the province. One of the first to be built was the Prince William school, constructed in 1844, boasting an average daily attendance of 10 boys and eight girls. Similar one-room schools appeared in many other communities. The cost of construction and additional pay for each teacher was covered by subscription among the local families.

Although some of the little schools were well constructed, others were crudely put together. Some were too small, and were merely roughly boarded in and not shingled. Some had no yard and the buildings were poorly ventilated. Even necessary teaching aids such as books, blackboards, paper, and pencils were lacking as well as furniture and apparatus.

Finally in 1871 when government officials realized there was a great need for change, the province passed the Common Schools Act and improvements were made which laid the foundation of our present school system.

By 1967 the little one-room schools were no longer used for education in the province so what has become of them?

Some had been poorly constructed and were now in such disrepair they had to be demolished. Some that had been better built were used as private dwellings while other well-built schools have been preserved through the years to become local points of interest to visitors. Wakem Corner schoolhouse became a meeting place for their local NB Women's Institute. A one-room school built in Chamcook in 1845 had been used by the local fishermen to repair and store their nets but was later restored as a dwelling. The school mentioned earlier built in Prince William was used as a hen house until purchased by Kings Landing Historical Settlement. The Cocagne one-room school ceased being a school in 1950. It was purchased by a local resident and used as a garage where vehicles were repaired. The Gagetown schoolhouse was donated to Saint John and was used for storage on the waterfront. The Tankville School has become a summertime museum. Gayton schoolhouse, Memramcook, is used for storage.

At one time there were 1500 one-room schools in our province. Other than a few which have been converted into other uses, our one-room schools which served as the backbone of New Brunswick's education, are now just a memory.