

Scripting for the Old Keeney Schoolhouse

Greet outside the Schoolhouse

“Welcome to the Old Keeney Schoolhouse. You are about to enter a one room schoolhouse that was built in 1751”

I am going to ring this bell, so cover your ears if you want, because it is very loud.

→Ring the Bell

Explain that the children would know it was time to come to school when they heard the bell

- Please leave your backpacks etc. in the coat room
- Boys sit on the right, girls on the left

Once Inside

Explain the history of the Schoolhouse

“This schoolhouse was built in 1751 and was originally located near where the Keeney School is today. It was being used to store wood and was in pretty bad shape. In 1976, our country was celebrating its 200 yr. anniversary. This was called the bicentennial celebration. The students at Keeney School raised the money needed to move this schoolhouse to where it is now. Volunteers used

what they could from the original and recreated this one room schoolhouse for us to enjoy and learn from today.”

The teacher would ring the bell an hour before class was to begin. If a student was late, they were not allowed to enter the classroom until after the morning recess. Even on the coldest days, they had to wait outside. The school day was from 8:00am until 4:00pm. The children came from farms in the area and some came quite a distance. It was very common for families to have 8-10 children and so you can see how easy it would be to fill up this classroom with 40-50 students. Sometimes there were as many as 60-70 students and their ages were from 3 to 18. The younger children sat in the front and the older children were in the back and against the walls. It must have been very challenging to be learning at all different levels. The older children would help the younger children.

→The teacher was called a Schoolmaster (man) or a Schoolmistress (woman). A schoolmistress could not be married and if she got married, she could no longer be the teacher. The Schoolmaster could be married or unmarried and was often college educated.

→You did not have to go to school. It was up to your family and whether they needed you at home to help with the farming or other chores. There was a winter session that may have started right after Thanksgiving and last until mid-March and a summer session from mid-May to August. There would be more girls during the summer session since the boys helped more with the farming. There would be more boys during the winter session. The whole school year revolved around the planting crops in the Spring and harvesting the crops in the Fall. Children had many chores to do and not too much time for play.

→ Does anyone know what it means to harvest the crops?

The Woodstove

In the winter, this schoolhouse could be very cold. This wood burning stove is what was used to keep it warm. The teacher would come early to get the fire

going and often, one of the older boys would be asked to take care of it. Sometimes the children would be expected to carry firewood from home.

If you stood around the stove you were warm, but the farther away you sat, the colder you were. There was no insulation in the walls to keep the heat in. Sometimes it was so cold that the bottles of ink used to write would freeze.

Bucket and Ladle

The students had to share the same bucket of water during the school day and they drank out of the same ladle.

- What does this tell us about what they understood about germs?
- Why were the boys always asked to get the water?

Lunch

Children had to bring their own lunch (often bread and cheese or meat and soup) carried in a basket or in a metal tin with a hot brick to keep it warm.

→ Show Lunch Bucket

What were the children taught?

You would learn to read, to spell and penmanship. Also, you would be taught arithmetic. Today we call it mathematics. It was often referred to as the three R's – Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic.

→ Does anyone know what we call arithmetic today?

→The Hornbook - a child's primer consisting of a sheet of parchment or paper protected by a sheet of transparent horn

→Slate and slate pencil- Children would be asked to use for spelling and arithmetic

→ Quill and ink

There was a lot of memorizing and reciting. It was not important that you understood what you were reading but that you could memorize it and recite to the schoolmaster when asked. This is called learning by rote.

Most of the time, students were memorizing at their seat, doing arithmetic with their slate, practicing penmanship or reciting to the Schoolmistress.

Spelling bees were common. At the end of the term, they would have a spelling bee and their parents would come. It would be the boys against the girls. The parent often used the child's success to decide if they would continue schooling.

Discipline

The Schoolmaster or Schoolmistress was very strict. It was very important that the classroom not be disrupted so if a child did misbehave they were punished right away. *Whispering, falling asleep in class, not completing lessons*

Let's imagine that one of the older boys has misbehaved.

→Ask for a boy volunteer

The boys and the girls were separated and were not allowed to play with each other. If a boy was caught talking to or playing with a girl, he may have to wear a

bonnet and go and sit with the girls. This was very embarrassing and not something he would soon forget.

If a boy did not complete an assigned lesson or misbehaved in some other way he may be asked to wear the dunce cap and sit on the dunce stool facing the wall.

Other punishments:

- Put your nose in a knot in the wall
- Stand straight and put your finger in a crack in the floorboard
- Stand straight with arm outstretched holding a stack of books.
- The schoolmaster might hit a real troublemaker with a switch – a stick stripped of its bark

If a child was punished at school and since their brothers and sisters may also be in the classroom, the parents would often hear about it once they got home. Then he may be punished once again.

Family Life

- Parents might have an average of 8-10 children with maybe 2-3 making it to adulthood
- Girls learned domestic skills (cooking, sewing, cleaning) while boys helped their fathers on the farms or in the shops (printing, cobbling [making shoes], wool making, or blacksmithing)
- Girls often got married at 13 or 14 and boys got married at 20-25

Conclusion

Life was hard during colonial times but the children wanted very much to learn to read and to write. They would walk sometimes a long way to get to school and then help get the fire going and many other chores to help the teacher. They wanted to do well in the spelling bees so their parents would let them continue to come to school.