

Then & Now Early Schools

Historical Summary

Much of this material has been compiled from previously written historical documents written by:

- Mrs. Herbert Houghton & Mrs. Kenneth Wheelan, "History of Princeton Schools"
- Phyllis Booth; The Landmark "One-room Schoolhouses Dotted Princeton's Countryside"
- United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places for PRINCETON CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
- Blake, Francis Everett. History of the Town of Princeton 1759-1915: Vol. 1 Chapter IX



1763-4: The first public school master employed to teach Princeton pupils was Mr. Samuel Woods. He taught students at his home at 136 Hubbardston Road (formerly Depot Road) across from Calamint Hill North Road. There were only 251 houses in Princeton, in the 1760's. He was paid £6 for his educational services. With this small sum of money, the terms of schooling must have been limited to a few subjects and weeks, and obviously the teacher remuneration was not very generous. But the rapidly increasing population demanded greater attention to the education of the children, and in 1766, the appropriation was more than doubled to £13, and in 1768 it was increased to £20. He continued to teach (perhaps with a hiatus for his service in the Revolution in 1774) for nearly 50 years, 1763-1813.

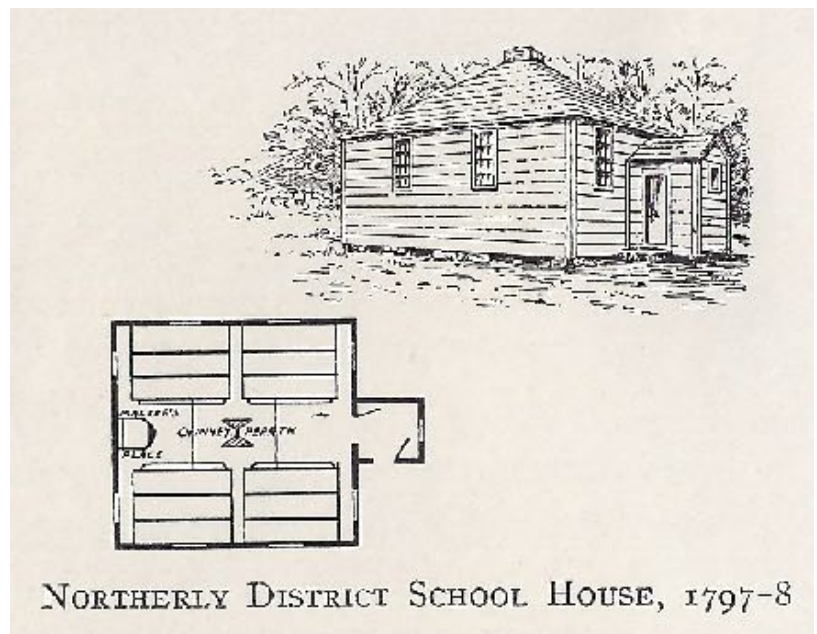
1766: There were 5 Districts or Squadrons in town - (North, East, Center (middle), West & South), and the Schools within each District were all in private homes conveniently located for the children in each District to reach. Princeton's total school appropriations were divided equally among all the Districts, and each District was charged to provide "Seasonable schooling by some person suitably qualified."

1769: Two more school Districts were added, "Northwesterly & Northeasterly", making the total number of Districts 7. The boundaries and school locations in these Districts were constantly being adjusted to keep the student populations about equal throughout the town.

1771: The citizens of Princeton voted to have "a School House be built in each squadron of ye town at ye town cost & that a School House be built in ye middle squadron 20 feet square and that \$100 be allowed for ye building. The same money be raised in ye middle squadron and ye other squadrons to be assessed by ye same proportion, for ye building ye other School Houses."

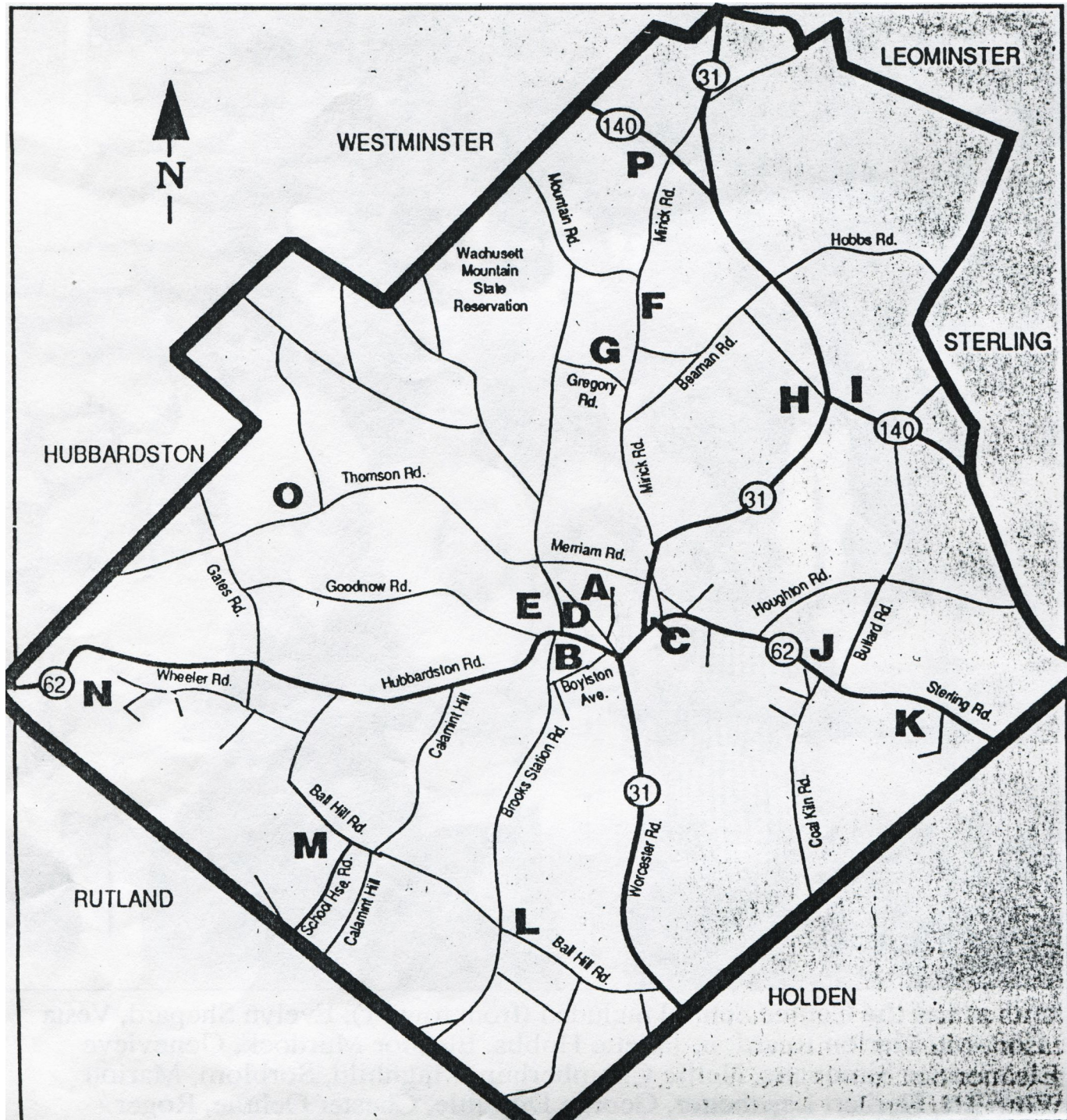
1774: The first school building was built in this year near the Meetinghouse Cemetary on Mountain Road (A on the adjoining map) at the cost of about \$110. It burned in 1789, but was immediately rebuilt. This school measured about 36 feet by 36 feet and had a 10 by 12 foot porch. In 1834, when it was no longer needed as a schoolhouse, John Stratton with the aid of "all the available men in town and their teams of oxen", moved the old schoolhouse from Mountain Road to its present location at 19 Hubbardston Road, adjacent to the Princeton Market building (B). It is now a private home.

Before 1785: it is interesting to note, only the simpler forms of study were taught, but very soon higher grades of instruction were demanded, so that there was before 1785 a woman's school (receiving one-fourth of the appropriation) and a man's school (receiving three-fourths of the appropriation) provided to each district, which came to be designated as a writing or reading, or occasionally as an 'arithmetic schools'.



1794: The construction of new schoolhouses for each District was contemplated but they didn't start to get built until 1797 or 1798, at which time quite a number were erected. In some cases, some public-spirited citizen gave the necessary land to the town. A rough sketch of the interior arrangement of one of these buildings preserved among the town papers is of interest. Its cost was about \$250.

The map on the next page marks the site of the 16 early schoolhouses that dotted Princeton during the 18th and 19th centuries.



The responsibility for overseeing the running of District Schools changed over the years and varied between Districts. Initially, a head of a family in each District was appointed to select/hire their Districts' teacher. The teacher often lived with a family in that District during a specific school session. This responsibility eventually became the responsibility of a committee of parents within each District. In 1797, the town created special instructions more closely defining the duties of the position, which were given to each of the District Committees so that there might be consistency. This practice continued to 1826. Some of these instructions were to:

- Provide a school building for that year.
- Procure a qualified Schoolmaster for each session.
- Provide a sufficient supply of firewood.
- Notify their District as to when the school will open.
- See that a schoolmaster could not be employed unless recommended by the selectmen of the town to which he belonged
- See that the schoolmaster be approved by Rev. Mr. Murdock, thus practically making the minister the chairman of the school committee.

1798: the Town voted to allow a stove for north district on certain conditions, but by 1807 it refused to buy them for other districts. In 1823 stoves were ordered for all districts not already provided, which shows that the stove had been gradually becoming a necessity.

The stoves were first a box stove and afterwards an open stove, placed in the center of the one-room schoolhouse. The open stove was made of cast iron similar to the Franklin stove only much larger.

1799: Princeton divided the town into 10 Districts, with the center being divided into School Houses #'s 1 and 9. These District Schools were one-room schools housing grades one through twelve. School in these early days had a summer session, which started the first Monday in June and lasted until December. The winter session started the first Monday in December. From 1837-1840 there were ten public schools in Princeton. According to town records, the population of the town was 1,267. The number of pupils of all ages in all schools was 303 in summer, with 10 teachers, and 437 in winter, also with 10 teachers, one for each District.

Location of the District Schools

School House #1 at 43 Gregory Hill Road (C), was built in 1810, of wood and was painted white. It primarily schooled the children living around Russell Corner.



School House #9 was built at 36 Hubbardston Road (D), and primarily schooled the children living around West Village and 'Methody Corner'. In 1883, when the Goodnow Library was completed, the pupils from #1 and #9 were consolidated and their classes held in the library. At that time, buildings #1 & #9 became private residences as they are today. [A second #9 schoolhouse (E) was briefly located on Allen Hill Road near 9 Allen Hill Road to handle overcrowding.]



School House #2 stood near the old stone house on Mirick Road (F), but it burned in 1837. While being rebuilt, students went to classes in the basement of 275 Mirick Road. The rebuilt schoolhouse was made of brick and located at the intersection of Gregory and Mirick Roads (G).

School House #3 was built in 1843 in East Princeton near the four corners behind Captain Bob's (H). In 1853, when Mechanic's Hall (I) was built, the District #3 students were moved to the new location. School sessions were held in the first floor classrooms for nearly 90 years. It was the last District School to close in 1945.

School House #4 was on a hill at the corner of Route 62 and Bullard Road (J). It was removed to its final location at 198 Sterling Rd. (K) and the cost of moving the building was \$250. It is now a private dwelling.



School House #5 was built around 1773. It was remodeled in brick in 1875, and located where the current private residence is at 96 Ball Hill Rd. (L). It was referred to as the Brooks Station School. Its students were sent to the Goodnow Library when it was opened as a school in 1887.



School House #6 was located on the corner of Ball Hill and Schoolhouse Roads (M). In 1916, it was abandoned and its nine pupils representing five grades were transported to the Center School. It is a private residence, and in 2009, it was demolished and rebuilt.



School House #7 was built in 1773 at 32 Wheeler Rd. (N)(Corner of Lyons Rd.), and it remained open until 1918 when it was closed. It has since been used as a private residence.



School House #8 was built around 1833 and was abandoned in 1921. The pupils were brought to the center for instruction. This schoolhouse stands at the fork of Thompson and Rhodes Road (O) just beyond the Stimson farm. It now used as a private residence.

School House #10 was not built until a later date. It was generally known as the Everettville School and was located at the end of Mirick Road on Osgood Rd. (P). It was a brick building and no longer exists.

Princeton Schooling Options Evolve

1828: John Brooks Esq. fitted up “his old store” which was located between #10 and #18 Worcester Road for the use of the town to be used as an English and Classical School. He also purchased a valuable philosophical apparatus and agreed to contribute for three years the sum of \$300 annually for the salary of the instructor, Warren Goddard, a graduate of Harvard University who was the professor in charge. It was agreed that; ‘He will board, instruct, and superintend the private studies and the moral conduct of scholars for \$33 per quarter. This school was maintained for several years with gratifying prosperity. The building was sold in 1831, and moved to 5 Hubbardston Road where it is currently located as a barn.

1837 – 1840: There were 10 public schools in Princeton. Princeton's population was 1,267. The number of scholars of all ages in all schools: summer, 303, with 10 teachers; winter, 437, also with 10 teachers.

1866: In an interesting State Board of Education report for 1866, an appeal for more funds is made, stating that our teachers were not only not as well paid as elsewhere, but not as well paid in almost any other form of employment. It goes on to state “while our taxes rest upon us heavily in view of the times in which our lot is cast, we are abundantly able to add the few needed hundreds to our school money and hardly be sensible that our burden is more mightily”. At this time, we find the town paying the women \$26.57 per month for summer school and \$29.50 for winter, while the men received \$43.33. We find that Miss Taylor received \$45.00 for nine weeks in a distant part of the town. Considering board and transportation, there was not much left for luxuries.

1869: In the school report of April, we find some interesting statistics. The town voted to have a high school for 2 ½ months, in the fall of 1868. A Mr. Addison Smith was the teacher and as he had 60 scholars. One of the older pupils, Miss Louise Eveleth, helped

with some of the smaller classes. (She later became a very fine teacher and taught for many years.) The report said that a great benefit was received for high school students at school in #8, because two months was approved. At that time, nine districts were operating with 218 scholars for the summer season and 250 for the winter.

1870's: A private school held in Boylston Hall with a college man as the teacher. Each student paid \$5.00 for the term of ten weeks. The cost of fuel was divided evenly. Mrs. Houghton's uncle tells of one boy who refused to pay his share of the fuel cost, on the grounds of having no benefit of the heat, because he had been kept in the anteroom so much of the time for misbehavior.

Before 1885: Each pupil furnished his own books and this led to much confusion as they were not all alike and the lesson on page 57 meant many different things in the half dozen arithmetic's and grammars. That year it became a State law that the towns must furnish the books and Princeton did so at an initial cost of \$460.82.



1887: The Goodnow Memorial Building opened to house the library on the right upon entering. The first and second floors on the left were used for school classes. District #1 and #9 students were moved here and received their instruction for the next 20 years.

It is believed that classes were discontinued at this location when the Center School opened in 1906.

Coming in the Future
"Princeton Schools Since 1900"

Please feel free to write us, if you have any questions or information to offer at:

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To learn more about Princeton's rich history, please visit:

<http://www.princetonmahistory.org>