

COVINGTON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

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School Days

As the seasons move into fall, our thoughts turn to cooler nights, fresh apples, falling leaves and the start of school. As children head back to school many of the traditions that we associate with today's education system were not part of the system in the 1800's and early 1900's.

The towns' churches established most of the schools for the sole goal of learning to read, especially the Bible. In fact many of the churches were used as schools.

Once communities began building their schools, they were configured as one-room schools, where a single teacher would teach grades 1-8.

There was no formal transportation for taking students to school as today. Most schools were built within 4-5 miles, which was "felt close enough to walk" (mentalfloss.com, 2019).

The school year was shorter than our present term lengths. The Department of Education collected data from schools in 1869-1870 and found that the average term was 132 days compared to today's 180 days. Much of this was dependent on the harvest and the need for the children to help at home. Most students only went to school for 78 days/year. In fact in the early days some schools had two sessions – Summer and Winter. The majority of the girls and younger boys would attend in the summer while the older boys would help in the fields and with the harvest. During the winter the boys would attend school and

the girls would help at home with the chores.

Teachers in the early 1800's were mainly men because women were expected to remain in the home. As more Americans moved west the call went out for more teachers; including women. Many women jumped at the chance to teach; unfortunately they were paid 40 to 60% less than their male counterparts. Women were expected to leave the profession when they were married.

There were strict expectations for the teachers' conduct, which included:

- Teachers were expected to whittle the pencils.
- After teaching, teachers were expected to read the Bible in their free time.
- Teachers were not permitted to drink alcohol.
- Teachers were not permitted to be engaged or married. Male teachers were permitted to court a woman.
- Male teachers were not permitted to go to a public barbershop for a haircut.
- Male teachers were responsible for bringing coal or wood for the stove, lighting all the lanterns, and for the upkeep of the school. ([curioushistorian](http://curioushistorian.com), 2019)

Many of the teachers lived with the families of the students and would

usually move to another home weekly. This was called "boarding around".

Students would normally bring their lunches from home in a pail. There were no school supplies and books were not provided. Students were encouraged to bring books from home to aid with exercises.

Students were seated with the youngest (called Abecedarians because they would learn their ABC's) in the front of the room and the oldest were in the back. Students were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, history, grammar, rhetoric, and geography. The students would memorize their lessons and they would go to the front of the room to recite what they learned. The teacher would then correct them on things like pronunciation. Students would help the teacher teach; this was known as Monitored or the Lancasterian System. Older, stronger students would learn lessons from their teacher and then would teach the younger and weaker students.

Discipline was very strict and could include detention, suspension or expulsion. Punishment could also include physical punishment, such as:

- Using a ruler, pointer, or switch to lash a student's knuckles or palms.
- Holding a heavy book for more than an hour.
- Writing "I will not..." do a certain activity on the blackboard 100 times.
- Wearing a dunce cap.

For the majority of students, formal education ended with the eighth grade. In order to graduate, the students would need to pass a final examination that tested the student on each of the taught courses.

Such a difference from the schooling we have now.

Could you pass a final eighth grade examination from 1895?

1. Give nine rules for use of capital letters.
2. Define: verse, stanza, and paragraph.
3. If a load of wheat weigh 3,942 pounds, what is it worth at .50 cents per bushel; subtracting 1050 pounds tare?
4. Find the cost of 6,720 pounds of coal at \$6.00 per ton.
5. Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion.
6. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus.
7. What are elementary sounds? How classified?
8. Give two uses of silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each. (mentalfloss.com, 2019)

(See answers on next page)

Answers:

1. **Capitalize the first word of the sentence.**
Capitalize names and other proper names.
Don't capitalize after a colon.
Capitalize the first word of a quote.
Capitalize days, months, and holidays, but not seasons.
Capitalize most words in a title.
Capitalize cities, countries, nationalities, and languages.
Capitalize time period and events.
Capitalize the first letter of the word in a salutation.

2. **Verse – any number of lines grouped together, whether it is an entire poem or just a section of it.**
Stanza – specifically refers to a formally defined unit of poem.
Paragraph – a distinct section of a piece of writing usually dealing with a single theme.

3. **\$24.93**
4. **\$20.16**
5. **First Battle of Bull Run**
Battle of Antietam
Battle of Gettysburg
Siege of Vicksburg
6. **Columbus's objective was to sail west until he reached Asia where the riches of gold, pearls, and spice awaited.**
7. **Elementary sound is one of the sounds which make up spoken words.**
Classified as vowels and consonants.
8. **Helps you tell the history of the word – Tsunami**
Serves to create heterographs out of homophones. Rite, right, wright