

# Jackson Township

Cambria County, Pennsylvania



## Chapter 9

### Annals of Jackson Township

**Mrs. Betty Burkhart**  
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## Schools

It is interesting to call to mind the beginning of free education in Pennsylvania, for prior to that time the only schools we had here were organized and kept up entirely by the parents of the children attending.

Before 1834 free education was an unheard of thing here and parents taught their children at home or secured the teacher and she (or he) was "boarded around" among the parents, each taking their turn, paying the teacher very little, usually ten to twelve dollars a month. However, the subjects "reading, writing and arithmetic" were very thoroughly taught, and usually singing was included. That is one reason why most of our older residents can read music so well. Writing was another subject in which the children were drilled, although it was thought unnecessary for girls to know as much about it as boys, so sometimes they were neglected. Arithmetic, or "sums" were given orally and slates were used by the pupils, being kept clean by a moist rag, (sometimes saliva), and books were furnished by the parents.

At an opening of the 1833-34 session of the General Assembly a bill was introduced to provide free education for all the children of Pennsylvania. The bill was bitterly opposed, many saying they would educate their own children but not their neighbors. The bill was passed, however, but repealed in 1834-35. It seemed to be lost when Thaddeus Stevens from Adam county arose in its defense and changed the opinion of many of the members. The bill was finally passed with a vote of 55 in its favor and 30 against it. In Cambria county we note with pleasure six were for it with just one against it.

Following the passage of this act the schools advanced much more rapidly and every child was entitled to an education regardless of whether or not their parents were able to pay for it. State aid was given to the schools, practically a gift on the part of the state. According to "100 years of Free Public Schools," money was distributed on the basis of the number of taxables and each district was supposed to raise by local taxation at least double that amount.

In 1903 an act regarding teachers salaries was passed, requiring the minimum salary to be \$35.00 per month. In 1919 under the Woodruff Bill, another increase was noted, and in 1941 a bill was passed giving the teacher a minimum salary of \$1,000 a year. The school directors organized in 1891. The first teacher's institute was held in 1867, or a little later.

In the early days teachers were examined by the school directors and as in those days they were not all of high education. They were often not qualified to give the tests. The teacher had to be able to teach the three important subjects, however. Many of our older

citizens in the township taught school when they were sixteen years of age, frequently to pupils much older than themselves. Among those who taught school in their youth and who are well known, were Harry Burkhart, Mrs. Flora Custer, former sheriff Cyrus Davis and his father, Wm. Davis, James Singer, (former recorder of deeds and register of wills), Ruby Stiles, Sam Snyder, Harry Lowman, Ruth Bartle, Mattie Rose, William Rose, and a Mr. Torrance.

In 1887 Jackson township had 10 schools with "5 male and 5 female" teachers. At that time the average school term, was five months and the males received thirty dollars a month with the females receiving twenty-five for the same period. At that time there were 303 children attending school.

Schools listed prior to that were Duncan, Dishong, Chickaree, Clinefelter, Wagoner, Jack Rager, Pike (or Gray), Burkhart, Leidy, Brown and Vinco. In later years some of these schools were discontinued. A school was located near what is known to this day as the school house flats, near the bend of road below Chickaree. James Singer taught school there for two years. Some of his boys were as large as he and he would relate how during the winter they would come to the school with their rifles over their shoulders and at noon would hunt for wild game in the surrounding woods. This old building was of log construction and was finally torn down and another one was built near the site of the present one at Chickaree. The logs were used in building a spring house on the David Leidy farm in that community.

A school building once stood in Leidy's Lane which was called the Leidy school, being on the Henry Leidy farm. It stood about 200 yards from the present barn located at that place. Later this school was moved to Mundy's Comer where it was used for several years, until the present structure was built. Blair Singer bought and remodeled the old Leidy school building and it has been the home of the Singer family since.

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