

# The GOLDFINCH

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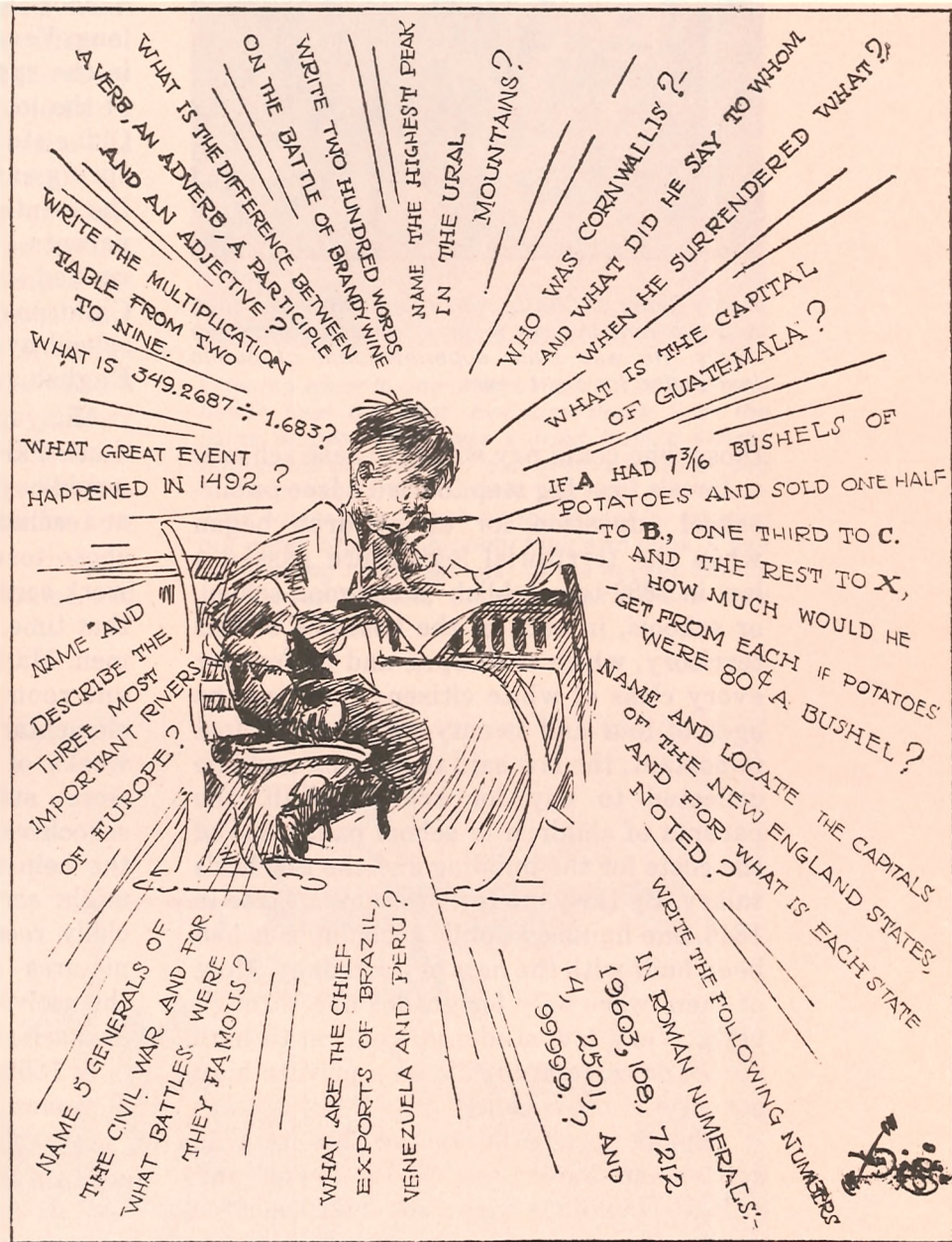
## Going to School in Iowa

The first known school in Iowa was a log schoolhouse at the settlement of Nashville (near present day Galland) in Lee County. Seven boys and one girl came, some crossing the river from Illinois. They went to school for three months, from October through December 1830. Their teacher was a frontier settler named Berryman Jennings, who wanted to be a doctor. In return for teaching, he received room and board at the Galland family home, along with a supply of firewood and the use of Dr. Galland's medical books to study.

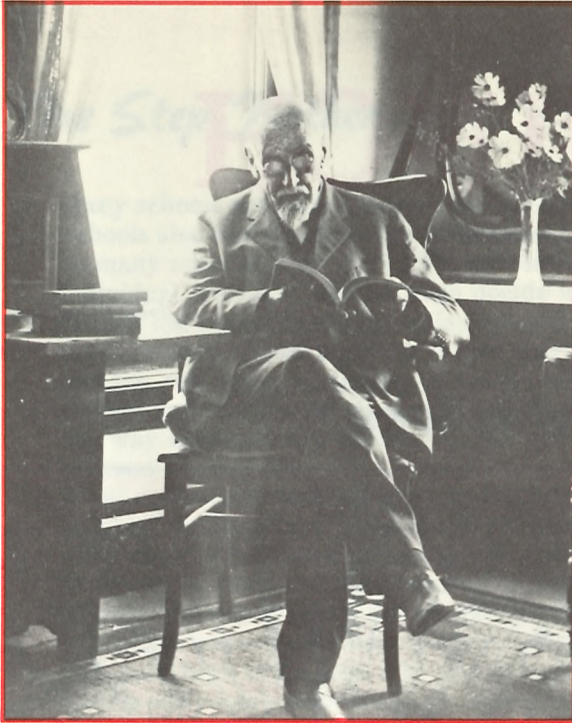
Most frontier schools like the one at Nashville were started by families who hired someone with enough education to teach. These teachers lived with one or more of the families (called boarding around) and received very little money. If there was no school building, classes were held in someone's home. The school terms were usually three months long. Each year, the children progressed a little farther in reading, writing, and ciphering. Only the children of

board *n.* — meals provided on a regular basis.

ciphering *v.* — using or learning arithmetic.



Taking a test seldom has been a favorite school activity, as this 1938 cartoon shows.



*Henry Sabin of Clinton was responsible for much improvement in Iowa's rural schools during the 1890s. He was state superintendent of public instruction for eight years.*

those who could pay went to these schools.

Iowa's first big step toward a free public-school education for all children began when the territorial legislature passed a law in 1839 to establish "a common school, or schools, in each of the counties of this territory, which shall open and be free for every class of white citizens between the ages of four and twenty-one years." Most important, the law said that taxes could be collected to pay for schools. Still, the parents of children in school paid some of the costs for the building and the teacher's salary. By the time Iowa became a state in 1846, one hundred public schoolhouses had been built with the help of tax money. Most of them were only for grades one through eight. Very few students went on to high school or to an academy, as a private high school was often called.

Schools sprang up across the state as settlement moved west. In towns and villages, buildings with a separate room for

each grade were built. But in the country, where most Iowans lived, a one-room schoolhouse would be built. There, children from the surrounding farms walked to the school, which was most often built of logs or wood. A water bucket to drink from sat just inside the door, and in the center of the room stood a large wood-burning stove, for heat. Rows of desks faced the teacher's desk and recitation bench at the front. Here students from five to twenty-one years old sat, reciting their lessons aloud while others wrote on squeaky slates. School terms were usually three months long. Very young students often came only in the spring and summer terms, because of the long, cold walk to school in winter. Older students worked in the fields in the spring and fall and got a little schooling in the winter. Schoolbooks were bought by parents, and whatever book a student walked in with was the one that was used. Children of recent immigrants were sent to school by parents eager for them to learn English.

Many of Iowa's early schoolteachers were much like Berryman Jennings. They were would-be doctors or lawyers, who took a turn at teaching to earn a little money. Women chose teaching because it was one kind of work considered respectable for a woman at that time. They always were paid less than men. Many who were hired to teach in the one-room schools had only finished elementary school themselves, plus a few weeks of teacher training. Some of them were successful — able to turn the schoolroom into a clean, orderly place with the help of their students. Such a teacher might arrive early to start the fire in the chilly room, and decorate bare walls with pictures and maps. Others would find themselves unable to control the students or to teach so many different ages all at once.

In 1856, Governor James W. Grimes had a committee study and report on the

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recitation *n.* — repeating something from memory.  
respectable *adj.* — proper.

schools in Iowa. The well-known Massachusetts educator, Horace Mann, was chairman of this committee. He wrote the plan that was to be followed by Iowa's schools for over fifty years. The goal was to provide a free common school education for all. New laws were passed that created school districts. Common schools (grades one through eight) were fully paid by taxes, but the students still brought their own books, slates, pencils, and paper.

Teachers were now required to take a test before they could be hired. The county superintendent of schools decided what should be on the test, and it was different in every county. One teacher told the story of how the man giving the test opened up a geography book, looked at the map, and asked, "What color is Massachusetts?"

Once hired, the teachers were on their own. There was no school nurse or janitor. The teacher swept the floor and tended the fire. Only a few knew how to plan a school day when they first began with their students. Important help arrived in the 1890s, when a teacher's guidebook was put out by Henry Sabin, the State Superintendent of Schools. It told teachers what kind of reading, writing, and arithmetic lessons to teach, and for how

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slate *n.* — a thin, hard rock put in a frame, and used for writing on..

privy *n.* — an outdoor toilet.

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*Drinking water in one-room schools was kept on a bench near the door. Everyone drank from the same dipper. Water was carried from a nearby farm-pump or stream. In later years a well was dug in the schoolyard and water was kept in a stone-ware cooler with a push button faucet for drawing out water. Students brought their own cups. A pan for washing hands sat next to the bucket. Notice the dinner buckets on the shelf. These held student's lunches.*

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*This picture of District School Number 6 in Maquoketa Township taken about 1934 shows the usual white rural schoolhouse with nearby woodshed and two privies. A water pump stands near the shed. This school had swings in the play yard.*



When an interested and hard-working teacher came to a rural school it became a pleasant place for young learners. This 1915 schoolroom in Page County had a small library, cheery wallpaper, an organ and pictures on the wall.

long. Another improvement came when schools began to provide textbooks, so students no longer had to buy their own.

Attending school was still a matter of choice. Some children in the city went to work in a factory or at another job instead of finishing school. For example, in Sioux City more than half the children who entered school in the 1880s dropped out after third grade. Many thought a little reading, writing, and arithmetic was all that they needed.

Day-to-day attendance at rural schools was even lower than at city schools. Children were needed for the endless work of the farm. Chores came first, and important lessons and skills in life were learned right at home. Because of the work on the farm, most rural children attended school less than two months a year.

Educators argued that more schooling

was needed to really prepare students growing up during a time when agriculture, transportation, and industry were all rapidly changing. They convinced the legislature to pass a law in 1902 that made school attendance compulsory at least three months a year for those between the ages of seven and fourteen.

City schools, with more students and more money to work with, moved rapidly ahead of the country schools. There were separate grades, with as many as fifty students working together in a classroom. There might be a special teacher for music, art, or science, and a library for eager readers. City schools often attracted the best teachers because salaries were higher than in country schools.

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compulsory *adj.* — something that must be done.



For many years rural schools did not have playground equipment. Students played games during recess, like these boys playing tug-of-war.

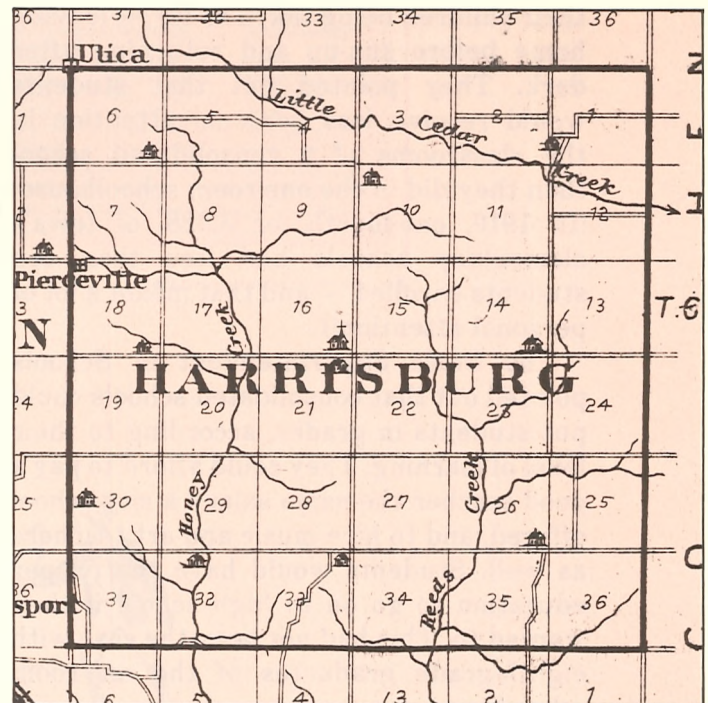
Country schools, however, remained much the same as when they were first built. By 1890 many school buildings had become old and needed repair and paint. Attendance was poor and teachers' wages were low. Because teachers moved from one job to another, students in rural schools seldom had an experienced teacher, or the same teacher for one whole year.

Iowans realized that rural schools needed improvement. They worked to make them better in two ways. The State Superintendent of Schools encouraged school districts to repair or rebuild one-room schools both inside and outside so that they would be clean and healthy places for students. But many Iowans believed that the real answer to the problems of the one-room school was more

than fixing up buildings. They believed that consolidation was the answer to the problems the one-room school suffered. Consolidation meant that all the school districts in a township close their one-room school and would send their students to one centrally located school. There were problems with this plan. It required some form of transportation to collect students from widespread farms and take them to school. Horse-drawn hacks moved slowly

### How Consolidation Worked

This map shows how Horace Mann's plan for district schools in each township worked. In Harrisburg Township, Van Buren County, there was a district school located near the center of four sections so that children could walk to school. When the township was consolidated the ten district schools were closed and all the students went to one township school. It was best to locate the consolidated school near the center of the township but sometimes a town or city was chosen. If the consolidated school for Harrisburg Township was located at Pierceville, how many miles would the children living in section 36 have to travel each day? (The numbers in the squares are section numbers.)



scale: 1/2 inch to one mile



*Buffalo Township, in Winnebago County, was the first to consolidate. In 1895, five horse-powered hacks transported seventy-one children to and from the Buffalo Center School. When the roads were too muddy for the hack to get through, a "bad roads vacation" was declared and there was no school until the roads were passable again.*

and parents strongly opposed the idea of their children being taken so far — leaving home before sun-up and returning after dark. They pointed out that students would receive less personal attention in the classrooms of a consolidated school than they did in the one-room schoolhouse. (In 1910, one-fourth, or 3,028, of Iowa's elementary schools had less than ten students enrolled — and that meant a lot of personal attention!)

The State Superintendent of Schools pointed out that consolidated schools could put students in grades, according to their level of learning. They could afford to pay a good teacher the same salary a city school offered, and to hire music and art teachers as well. Students would have the proper education to go on to high school if they wanted to. This had not been the case with eighth-grade graduates of the one-room schoolhouse.

Consolidation moved slowly in Iowa. So,

in 1913, to encourage rural districts to consolidate, the state offered \$750 a year to any school that offered vocational and industrial courses. Then, in 1919, the legislature passed a law ordering schools with fewer than ten students to close. By 1921 there were over 400 consolidated schools compared to 53 in 1904.

To further improve education for young Iowans, teachers were required to have a high-school diploma after 1915, and in 1919 the compulsory school term was lengthened to eight months.

The Great Depression stalled school consolidation for almost twenty years. Then, after World War II, more money came from the state government to pay for rural school-bus transportation. Faster gasoline-powered buses had replaced the horse-drawn hacks, and more districts decided to consolidate.

Then, in 1953 a new kind of consolidation began. Instead of consolidated districts,

larger community districts were formed. Often these new districts combined two smaller consolidated districts. Sometimes the names of these larger districts tell the story. Iowa's first consolidated school district merged with another to make Buffalo Center-Rake Community School District. It had two elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school for the whole area of 141 square miles.

In 1965, the legislature wrote the end of the story of the one-room rural school. It passed a law ordering all the remaining one-room schools closed by 1966.

By that time, bright yellow gasoline-powered buses had become a common sight on paved and graveled roads in rural Iowa taking children to and from their community schools.

### A Sample Day in a One Room School

FORENOON.							
BEGIN.	CLOSES.	TIME.	1ST CLASS.	2D CLASS.	3D CLASS.	4TH CLASS.	5TH CLASS.
9:00	9:05	5m			OPENING EXERCISES.		
9:05	9:15	10	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Reading.	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:15	9:30	15	Seat Work.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:30	9:45	15	Seat Work.	Numbers.	<i>Reading.</i>	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:45	10:00	15	Copying.	Numbers.	Arithmetic.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>	Arithmetic.
10:00	10:20	20	Copying.	Copying.	Arithmetic.	Geography.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>
10:20	10:30	10	* <i>Gen. Lessons.</i>	* <i>Gen. Lessons.</i>	Drawing.	Geography.	Drawing.
10:30	10:45	15			RECESS.		
10:45	11:00	15	Seat Work.	Writing.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>	Geography.	Geography.
11:00	11:15	15	Seat Work.	Copying.	Language.	<i>Geography.</i>	Geography.
11:15	11:30	15	Numbers.	Copying.	Language.	Reading.	<i>Geog. or Hist.</i>
11:30	11:45	15	Numbers.	Reading.	Writing.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.
11:45	12:00	15	Dismissed.	Reading.	Reading.	Grammar.	<i>Reading.</i>
AFTERNOON.							
1:00	1:10	10	Reading.	Reading.	Reading.	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:10	1:20	10	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:20	1:30	10	Copying.	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:30	1:45	15	Numbers.	Copying.	Spelling.	<i>Grammar.</i>	Grammar.
1:45	2:00	15	Numbers.	Writing.	Spelling.	Drawing.	<i>Grammar.</i>
2:00	2:30	30	* <i>Gen. Lessons.</i>	* <i>Gen. Lessons.</i>	* <i>Gen. Lessons.</i>	Writing.	Physiology
2:30	2:45	15			RECESS.		
2:45	3:00	15	Reading.	Reading.	Spelling.	Spelling.	<i>Physiology.</i>
3:00	3:10	10	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Spelling.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:10	3:20	10	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Spelling.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:20	3:30	10	Copying.	Copying.	Spelling.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:30	3:40	10	Drawing.	Reading.	Copying.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:40	3:50	10	Numbers.	Reading.	Reading.	Reading.	Spelling.
3:50	4:00	10			<i>General Exercises.</i>		

Italic type denotes recitations, Roman letters what the other classes should study. Classes are numbered to correspond with the readers. \*Gen'l Lessons or Dismissed.

Handbook for Iowa Teachers, 1890



## Readin' and 'Riting' . . .

FOURTH READER.

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### XII. WHERE THERE IS A WILL THERE IS A WAY.

1. HENRY BOND was about ten years old when his father died. His mother found it difficult to provide for the support of a large family, thus left entirely in her care. By good management, however, she contrived to do so, and also to send Henry, the oldest, to school, and to supply him, for the most part, with such books as he needed.

2. At one time, however, Henry wanted a grammar, in order to join a class in that study, and his mother could not furnish him with the money to buy it. He was very much troubled about it, and went to bed with a heavy heart, thinking what could be done.

3. On waking in the morning, he found that a deep snow had fallen, and the cold wind was blowing furiously. "Ah," said 'he, "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

4. He rose, ran to the house of a neighbor, and offered his service to clear a path around his premises. The offer was accepted. Having completed this work, and received his pay, he went to another place for the same purpose, and then to another, until he had earned enough to buy a grammar.

5. When school commenced, Henry was in his seat, the happiest boy there, ready to begin the lesson in his new book.

6. From that time, Henry was always the first in all his classes. He knew no such word as fail, but always succeeded in all he attempted. Having the will, he always found the way.

DEFINITIONS.—1. Mān'age-ment, manner of directing things. 2. Fū'r'nish, to supply. 3. Fū'ri-ōus-ly, violently. 4. Sēr'vice, labor. Prēm'i-ses, grounds around a house.

### SPIDERS.

1. If we could only persuade ourselves to make spiders a study, instead of looking at them with a feeling of horror, we might learn much that would interest us.

2. There are the gossamer spiders who float high into the air, borne upon an almost invisible thread. The water spiders, who form an air-tight dwelling under the waves. The hunting spiders, who creep quietly along and then spring, like lightning, upon their prey. The pirate spiders, who skim over the surface of the water and snatch up the helpless flies.

3. The garden spider is a busy little fellow. His net is formed from a gummy substance kept in a little bag called a spinneret, through the holes of which it is drawn and becomes hard when exposed to the air.

4. Each thread is composed of many thousand lines. When his web is woven, the spider hides himself under a leaf and pounces upon any unwary fly that has been caught in his silken trap.

5. Should the fly be a large one, the spider encircles it with fresh threads until it has bound its wings and legs to its body, and, then, breaking



Rebecca Pollard, an Iowa teacher and writer, was the author of a series of readers and spellers. Many Iowa school districts used the Pollard series books. This page is from the 1890 third reader which was written for the third grade students. Before 1920, books seldom had colored illustrations. Much of what boys and girls learned from books was memorized and then recited before the teacher.

Readers used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were graded differently from the way we do it now. There were five readers and the student's grade level was set by the reader in which the child was studying. The fourth reader was used in the fifth and sixth year of school. Until the 1890s most readers were written with the aim to develop good oral reading. There were no questions about knowing what had been read. Even after 1900 much of what boys and girls learned from books was memorized and then recited before the teacher. By the 1930s most Iowa schools had switched from the old graded reading series to those with a book for every year of elementary school.

A B C D E E F G H I J K L M  
 N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
 a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p  
 q r s t u v w x y z 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0.

This is the Palmer Method alphabet. Austin Norman Palmer of Cedar Rapids developed the Palmer Method of handwriting instruction. By 1915 it was used in schools from New York City to Los Angeles.



## A Father Fights For Equal Rights

On September 12, 1867, twelve year old Susan Clark was denied admission to Muscatine's Second Ward Common School Number 2 because she was black. The board of education soon learned the error of this decision, for she was the daughter of Alexander Clark, a prominent — and determined — businessman of Muscatine.

Alexander Clark was born in Pennsylvania in 1826. He was a bright boy who liked to learn. His whole world was his school, and all the people he met became his teachers. When he was thirteen years old, Alexander went to live with an uncle in Cincinnati. There, he learned to be a barber, and attended school for a short time. In 1842, when he was just sixteen, he came to Muscatine, Iowa Territory, to begin work as a barber.

Mr. Clark was a good businessman. He invested his money wisely and became a property owner. His business grew along with the bustling, young city of Muscatine. In 1868, he retired from his barbering business and spent the rest of his life in public service.

Alexander Clark became a leader in the movement for equal rights. Following the Civil War, he went with a group of black people to Des Moines and talked with legislators about changing the Iowa constitution. The group was successful, and in 1868 the word "white" was dropped from the constitution, which meant that black men, too, could vote.

Alexander Clark married Catherine Griffin of Iowa City in 1848. They believed schooling was important and wanted their children to receive the best education possible. Many Iowa towns had separate schools for black students at that time, and the Clark's daughter, Susan, attended the African Methodist Episcopal African School. She was a good student, and by the time she was twelve Susan was ready for more advanced schooling. She had learned all that she could at the school for black children. So, Susan's father decided she should go to the public school to continue her education. But, when Susan tried to go

United States Biographical Dictionary



Alexander Clark

to the Muscatine Public School, she was not allowed to enter.

Alexander Clark acted quickly. He filed suit against the school board. The case went to the Iowa Supreme Court, which ruled that the school board "cannot deny a youth admission to any particular school, because of . . . color, nationality, religion, or the like."

Later, Susan went to Muscatine High School. So did her sister Rebecca and brother Alexander, Jr. After Alexander, Jr. graduated from the University of Iowa law school in 1880, Alexander Clark decided to study law, too. He graduated at the age of fifty-eight. Unfortunately, Mrs. Clark did not live to see her son or husband achieve that goal.

For many years, Alexander Clark had been active in politics. Now he spent more and more time working for the Republican party. He became a highly respected member, and in 1890 President Benjamin Harrison appointed him resident minister and consul general to Liberia. Mr. Clark travelled the long distance to Africa early in 1891. There, in that far-off land, he became ill with a fever and died.

Alexander Clark is remembered as the man who saw the problem of segregated schools and did something about it. Although it was not until 1874 that all of Iowa schools were desegregated, Alexander Clark and his daughter Susan led the way for this very important change.

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resident minister and consul general *n.* — an official appointed by the government to represent the United States in a foreign country, and to care for the well being of United States citizens in that country.

# Getting to School

Division of the State Historical Society



*Some rural-school students rode horseback. Most walked, book and dinner bucket in hand.*

Division of Historical Museum & Archives



*Motor buses and improved roads made the ride to school much faster than the one in horse-drawn hacks. These buses carried students to and from Tipton Consolidated Schools in the 1940s.*

Division of Historical Museum & Archives



*Boys and girls in towns usually walk to school. When there are busy streets to cross, a student School Safety Patrol member helps classmates cross the street safely. The American Automobile Association began the School Safety Patrol in the 1920s.*

**DIRECTIONS:** This is a test of your knowledge of the meaning of words. In each item below, you will find a phrase or sentence at the left, followed by four numbered words. In each case you are to decide which of the four words given has most nearly the same meaning as the underlined word in the phrase. Then write the number of that word in the parentheses before the item.

For example, in the first item, the word "little" has most nearly the same meaning as "small," the underlined word in the phrase at the left. The number 4 is therefore written in the parentheses before the item.

- (4) 0. A small boy.....(1) large, (2) tall, (3) nice, (4) little
- ( ) 1. A dreadful scene.....(1) dangerous, (2) wrong, (3) terrible, (4) disgusting
- ( ) 2. Unclean habits.....(1) strong, (2) filthy, (3) secret, (4) unusual
- ( ) 3. An endless uproar.....(1) loud, (2) sudden, (3) continual, (4) brief
- ( ) 4. Upset our plans.....(1) told, (2) guessed, (3) stole, (4) disturbed
- ( ) 5. Rescue her from danger.....(1) carry, (2) escape, (3) save, (4) hide
- ( ) 6. A furious storm.....(1) fierce, (2) unusual, (3) sudden, (4) cold
- ( ) 7. An angry mob faced him.....(1) tramp, (2) crowd, (3) foe, (4) lunatic
- ( ) 8. To extend a vacation.....(1) take, (2) shorten, (3) lengthen, (4) postpone
- ( ) 9. To slope a lawn.....(1) mow, (2) smooth, (3) slant, (4) straighten
- ( ) 10. The darling of the king.....(1) servant, (2) leader, (3) favorite, (4) jester
- ( ) 11. Wholesome food.....(1) pleasant, (2) delicious, (3) mixed, (4) healthful
- ( ) 12. A shady spot.....(1) pretty, (2) clear, (3) different, (4) sheltered
- ( ) 13. To adjust a telescope.....(1) regulate, (2) use, (3) move, (4) settle
- ( ) 14. An agreeable surprise.....(1) pleasing, (2) interesting, (3) complete, (4) sudden

## All those Tests!

Tests are a part of school. Whether we like them or not, they are one way teachers can learn where a student's strengths and weaknesses are. It helps teachers do their job better. There is a special test that most Iowa school children take every year — the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

It all began in 1929 as a contest for high school students called the Iowa Academic Meet. The tests for the meet were written by educators at the University of Iowa. First, tests were given in the spring in high schools that chose to take part. They were scored at the schools, and the results were sent to the University. Then, the top-scoring students in each subject went to the University at Iowa City for final tests. Finally, the top ten students in each subject received medals at a banquet.

Teachers were sometimes amazed when they saw the results of the test — some of the top students on the test had been thought lazy or unpromising, and they had been getting poor grades. Once these students had shown their ability their grades often improved quite suddenly!

In 1935, a new test program — the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills — began for grades six through eight. This was not begun as a contest. The purpose was (as it really had been for the high school test) to help teachers know where students were doing well and where they might need help. The tests were very successful and in 1940 they were sold throughout the nation. From that time on, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills have remained a useful tool to measure learning progress. The test on this page is the vocabulary test from the 1935 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills given to the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. It was scored by the teacher. It looks very different from today's tests that are scored by an electronic machine that can "read" 40,000 sheets per hour.

Answers are on page 16.

## Ceremonies and Celebrations

There are many ceremonies and celebrations that have been a part of school **custom**. Some are still observed, while others have been dropped. In 1930, the days when special school programs were held included Armistice Day, Hallowe'en, Christmas, Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Arbor Day, and Memorial Day. Which of these days does your school observe? Are there other ceremonies or celebrations that are part of your school's customs?

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*As the day began at this school in the 1930's, boys and girls gathered to raise and salute the flag. Until 1942, the arm was extended during the pledge and allegiance at the words "to the flag." After that time the right hand was placed over the heart.*

Arbor Day was first meant to help the treeless states of the Midwest. It promoted planting of trees for fuel, timber, shade, protection for buildings and crops, and for beauty. The first Arbor Day was held in 1872, in Nebraska. The idea spread to almost every state in our country. Iowa schools celebrated by planting trees in schoolyards, learning proper care of trees, and studying the importance of forests. There were also ceremonies with poems, songs and speeches about trees.

### Arbor Day Riddle

I have only one foot, but thousands of toes;  
My one foot stands, but never goes.  
I have many arms, and they're mighty, all;  
And hundreds of fingers, large and small.  
From the ends of my fingers my beauty grows.  
I breathe with my hair, and I drink with my toes.  
I grow bigger and bigger around the waist,  
And yet I'm always tight laced.  
None e'er saw me eat — I've no mouth to bite;  
Yet I eat all day in the full sunlight.  
In the summer with song I shake and quiver,  
But in winter I fast and groan and shiver.

— George MacDonald

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**custom** *n.* — a generally accepted way of doing things.

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*Boys and girls at the Dickens school weave patterns on the maypole during this 1915 celebration of May Day.*

## Schools for Amish Children

Letter to the Editor  
Des Moines Register  
November 11, 1965

### QUESTION PLAGUES TEACHERS

Are the Amish wrong? As two certified public school teachers, this question plagues us. It seems to us that a huge injustice has been done by our state's persecution of people who sincerely wish to be different.

Granted there is a law that public schools must have "certified" teachers; yet isn't there something drastically wrong with a law that imposes our standard of education upon others who don't accept the standards as valid for their way of life?

This seems to be their main crime; not being like we are. Are they really being persecuted for breaking "the law" or because we assume that our chrome-plated way of life is best?

— Holstein, Iowa

Letter to the Editor  
Des Moines Register  
July 24, 1971

### CLAIM SCORES HIGHER IF AMISH TEACH

According to the Des Moines Register, the study, completed this week, argues that Amish school children in this area who had been taught by Amish teachers scored consistently higher on the Iowa basic skills test than did Amish children from the same cultural background who were taught by certified teachers.

"I will always believe that Iowa and America are big enough in space and spirit to provide a kindly place for all good people regardless of race, creed, or custom. One of the most precious parts of the American heritage has been our willingness as a people to lean over backwards to assure minority groups freedom of belief. It is a tradition worth preserving."

— Governor Harold Hughes, 1966.

In 1728 the first group of Amish crossed the Atlantic and arrived in the New World to practice freely their religious way of life. The Amish were mainly farmers, and as the United States grew westward, groups of Amish people migrated to the farming lands of Iowa.

Most Amish believe that farming is the simplest and best way of life. They use old farming methods. "A tractor gets the work done more quickly, but horses and the love of hard work keeps us nearer to God," one man declared. Clothing and homes are kept as plain as possible. Decoration of any kind is avoided. The Amish discourage knowledge of the world outside their settlement.

To teach their children this way of life the Amish have their own schools. Amish teachers teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. At home children learn farming, cooking, sewing, and gardening.

In Iowa there have been arguments about the Amish kind of schooling. The State of Iowa is responsible for the education of Iowa children. The State law says that school teachers must be certified. Often, Amish schools are taught by young girls with only an elementary school education. In 1965, officials closed an Amish school

because the teacher was uncertified. The parents were told they must send their children to public school. When they refused, heavy fines were demanded. All over the state, people talked about the Amish school issue. They wrote letters to the editor in the newspapers. The governor made his views known.

The Amish based their right to have separate schools on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, the State said these schools were below standard. The Iowa General Assembly debated the school issue. They decided to amend the education Code of Iowa so that the Amish could educate their own children but must request permission each year to open their schools. The schools would be inspected every year before they could open. Permission was granted every year until 1971, when the State Board of Public Instruction denied the Amish request. Once again, Amish parents refused to send their children to public schools. Finally, in another vote, the Board decided in favor of opening the schools. But each year, the Amish must request permission to continue the education of their children in the way they believe is right.



Phoebe W. Sudlow

Phoebe Sudlow had taught in public schools for twelve years. Because she was a good teacher, the city school superintendent asked her to come to Davenport. So, in 1858, Phoebe Sudlow left a rural school in Scott County and began teaching in the city. In only three years she was appointed principal. The Civil War had just begun. Many men, including teachers, were leaving to join the army and women were hired to fill the jobs they left when they went to war. In fact, after the Civil War, there never again were more men teachers than women.

Before Phoebe Sudlow accepted the job of principal, she told the board of education that she expected to receive the same salary that would be given to a man. She refused to consider working for less. The board had to think it over. Women teachers had always been paid much less than men, but the board had never hired a

woman to be principal before! Finally, the school board agreed to her request. Still, women teachers continued to receive less money than men.

Miss Sudlow next became the principal of the Training School for Teachers. Then, in 1874 she was chosen Davenport Superintendent of Schools. This made her the first woman superintendent of public schools in the United States.

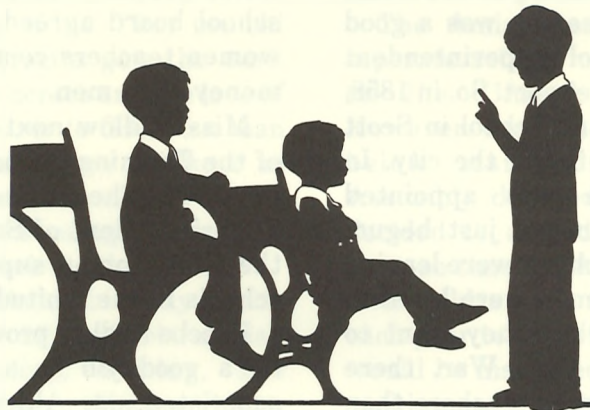
Phoebe Sudlow proved that a woman could do a good job as a teacher, principal, or superintendent. Although she continued to work very hard for equal salaries for teachers, she did not live to see her hope come true. This did not happen until the 1960s.

The people of Davenport did not forget Phoebe Sudlow. They named a school for her — a reminder of the outstanding teacher who became the first woman superintendent of schools in the United States.

## One Step Farther...

1. Many schools are named after people. Names of United States presidents are most popular. Schools also have been named for heroes, famous authors, and trees. Iowans' names are found on many schools. If your school is named for a person, find out as much as you can about that individual. Perhaps you can even decide why that name was chosen for your school.
2. Collect old report cards for a classroom display. Compare the kinds of information that the cards report. What subjects were taught? How was behavior reported? (Ask mothers, fathers, relatives, or neighbors if they will loan their cards to your class.)
3. Collect and display old class photographs. Look at the clothing the children wore. Compare the way students are dressed in the different years and try to tell why the students are dressed as they are.
4. What special services are provided at your school? Is there a school nurse, counselor, music teacher, or librarian? Make a list of the special helpers at your school. How much of this work could a one-room school teacher do?
5. Students in Iowa are not required to attend a public school. Many children go to private schools (schools that are not paid for with tax money). Find out if there are private schools within the area of your school district. In what way are they different from public schools? Can you think of reasons why the private school is important to those who attend it?
6. Visit a one-room school museum. (See the book, *Discovering Historic Iowa*, by LeRoy Pratt, for locations.) Living History Farms school is open for fifth-grade classes to visit for a day in school. (Call, or write to Living History Farms for information. Rural Route 1, Des Moines, Iowa 50322, 515-278-5286.)

Test answers: 1 (4), 2 (2), 3 (3), 4 (4), 5 (3), 6 (1), 7 (2), 8 (3), 9 (3), 10 (3), 11 (4), 12 (4), 13 (1), 14 (1).



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