

# EXPLORING AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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## HARMONIST SCHOOL

Education was very important to the Harmony Society. They provided a school for both their own children as well as the children of their hired workers. All children between ages 6 to 14 were required to attend school 7 days a week. On Sundays, children would report to the school for religious instruction. So on Sundays it was more like Sunday school at a church, but the children met at school. Harmonist children only attended school in the morning and would go home for their lunch.

Children were instructed in the basics such as reading, writing and arithmetic, but also studied more sophisticated and complicated subjects in their schools. Teachers taught advanced studies in mathematics and the sciences. Students were taught, German, English, Latin and French. Several teachers were Jacob Henrici, Dr. Mueller, Peter Kaufmann and Frederick Eckensburger. Some Educators were appointed from within the Society, while others were hired from outside of the Society and were considered paid workers. Harmony Society member teachers lived in the village and their needs were provided for by the community. Non-member teachers were paid by the Society.

**What was school like within the Harmony Society? What was school like for other Americans during this same period of history? The following will explore and provide some answers. There also will be some hands-on activities to try at home.**

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Since children in the Harmonist town of Economy didn't attend school in the afternoon, the second half of the day was used for apprenticing. Girls would learn housekeeping or other appropriate apprenticeships, such as working in the silk and cotton factories and boys did trades that were within their capabilities. Students attended school until age 14. At that time, they became full-time apprentices. Not all boys and girls became full-time apprentices, some worked in the factories. Students were apprentices until they became proficient in their trade. Apprentices outside of the Harmony Society would become journeymen before they became master craftsmen. A journeyman is a tradesman or craftsman who has completed an apprenticeship but is not yet able to set up his or her own workshop as a master. The journeyman sometimes moved from one town to another to gain the experience of other workshops. Harmony Society apprentices did not journey outside of the community to gain experience from other workshops. Some children decided to leave the Harmony Society when they became an adult. Then they would take their journeyman skills they learned as an apprentice and join a master craftsman in another town.

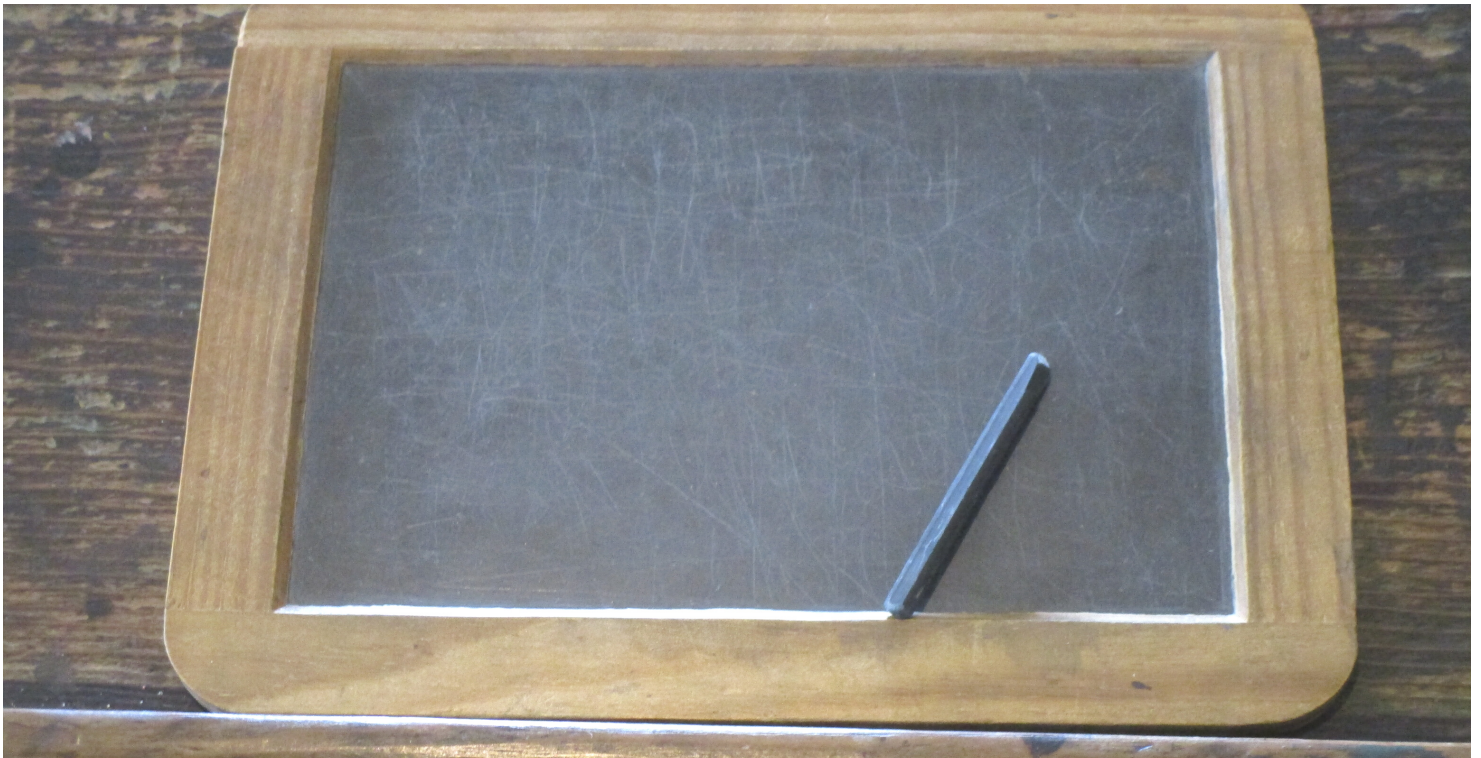


## TYPICAL 19TH CENTURY SCHOOLS

In a typical non Harmonist 19th century school, the school day lasted from early morning to mid-afternoon, Monday through Friday. This depended upon the time of year (winter vs. summer) and the location of the school (rural or urban). A typical day began with the teacher ringing the school bell about 9 a.m. Students would form two lines, girls in one line, boys in the other. The girls entered the school first. Pupils hung up their coats and wraps, put their lunches away (the children at Economy went home for lunch since they all lived in town) and took their seats.

In many rural areas and really small towns, children went to a one room schoolhouse and there was only one teacher for all 8 grades. (There was no kindergarten back then). The younger students would sit at the front of the class and older students in the back. While one grade (class) was up front reciting, the others were busy studying, memorizing or writing their lesson on their slates. Slates were a fine grained metamorphic rock which was split into thin layers and used as a writing surface. They looked like miniature black chalk boards.





A stylus was a sharp pointed instrument made from lead that was used for writing on the slate. There was a short recess in the middle of the morning followed by more lessons. There was a recess for lunch and the afternoon was a repeat of the morning. Sometimes the teacher would read a story or parts of a longer story to the whole group. Spell downs or group singing also took place.

Prior to arriving at school, the children had to do their chores at home. When crops had to be planted or harvested the children did not go to school since their help was needed elsewhere. There typically was a winter and a summer term. Younger children attended the summer term while the older ones helped with the farm work.

Drinking water had to be carried into the school from outside. This chore was usually done by an older boy. Everyone used the same gourd dipper or tin cup to drink. They didn't know that this could spread germs.

Early schools were heated by a fireplace. Then stoves were often used to heat rooms. The wood had to be carried in from outside, usually by an older boy. Some schools had stoves that used wood or coal. On hot days, the windows could be opened. Since there was no electricity only the light from the windows was available.

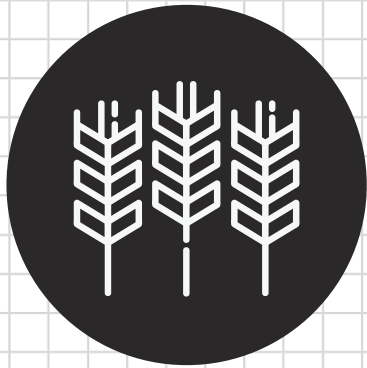
In the nineteenth century, schools did not have custodians. The teacher and the students had to do the work of cleaning up the classroom, shoveling the snow from the doorstep, and bringing in the firewood and the water.

After completing school at the age of 14 they would begin their apprenticeships until age 21 when they became a journeyman. Some of these journeymen would go on to become Master Craftsmen and have a trade shop of their own.

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# INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

In colonial days and for most of the 1800s, children were not mandated to attend school. In 1880, it became mandatory to attend school until 10 years of age. In 1889, the age was raised to 12. Children may have only attended school once or twice a week. Their families may have needed them in the fields to plant or harvest crops.



# INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT AMERICAN 19TH CENTURY TEACHERS

Teachers could teach 8th grade or lower after having completed the 8th grade. If the teacher had completed high school, he or she would be able to teach the upper grades. There were no curriculum standards for teachers. Itinerant teachers traveled from town to town wherever educators were needed. Frequently, families would pool their resources to pay a teacher and to provide room and board. Teachers had to have high moral standards, such as honesty, truthfulness, respect, etc. Often time, one teacher taught several grades in the same classroom.

## VOCABULARY WORDS DEALING WITH 19TH CENTURY SCHOOLS

- 1. Quill:** A pen for writing made from the wing or tail feathers of a bird. Usually feather from a goose or turkey were used.
- 2. Pen wipers:** Scraps of material used to remove excess ink from a quill.
- 3. Elocution:** The style of speaking or reading aloud.
- 4. Enunciation:** The ability to pronounce words in a proper manner.
- 5. Enunciation Cards:** These were index cards with sayings on them, which help students learn to properly pronounce words. These could be in the form of a "tongue twister".





# FUN THINGS TO TRY AT HOME

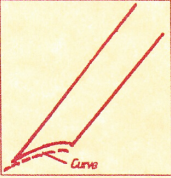

From *Historical Folk Toys in Charlotte, North Carolina*.

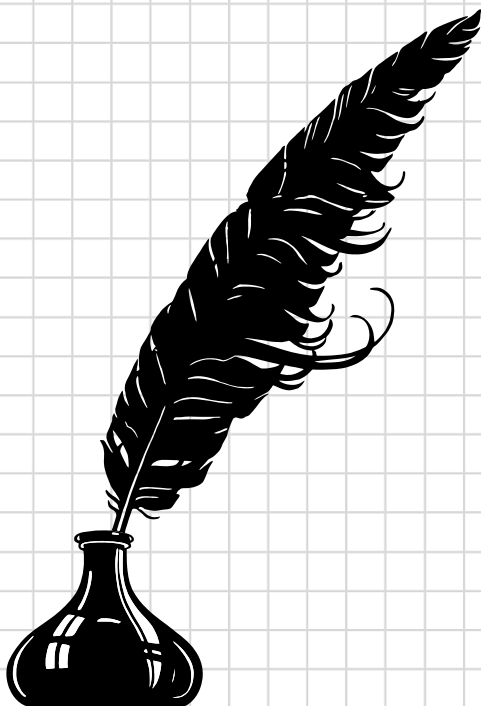


## How to Make a Quill Pen



*Children should have adult supervision on this project.*

1. Soak the tip of the quill in a cup of warm water for about 15 minutes or longer. This will soften the end of the quill.
2. If necessary, use scissors and trim some of the feathers near the tip until it is comfortable to hold like a pen.
3. Carefully cut the end of the quill off at a 45-degree angle as shown. This will form the nib, or point, of the pen. 
4. If needed, clean out the inside of the stalk. Be careful not to crack the nib.
5. Use a penknife to cut a slit up the center of the pen about one half inch in length. This slit will help control the flow of the ink. 
6. Dip the nib of the quill into the ink. Press the nib gently on a piece of felt or several small layers of cotton to blot the excess ink.
7. Hold the pen at an angle to practice writing. Hold the pen at different angles and use different amounts of pressure to experiment with writing techniques.
8. When the nib becomes worn or soft or damaged just follow the steps above to cut a new nib.



## MAKE YOUR OWN HOME-MADE INK FROM BERRIES.

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup of berry juice

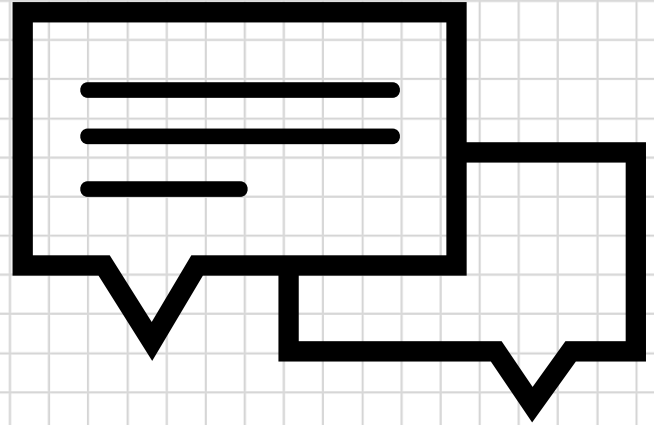
1/2 tsp; salt

1/2 tsp; white vinegar

You can use blueberries, raspberries or strawberries. Put a strainer over a jar (that has a matching lid to use later) and crush several berries allowing the juice to pass through the strainer and into the jar. The back of a spoon usually works well for doing this. Continue this until you have 1/2 cup of berry juice. Then add the 1/2 tsp. of salt and 1/2 tsp. of white vinegar. Stir with the spoon and then screw the lid on the jar. Keep in mind that the berries easily stain, so be careful while you are making this mixture. The final ink product stains as well.

Writing with a quill pen takes getting used to. It is recommended you put some old newspapers down underneath the paper you are using to write on. Be careful and have fun.

# ENUNCIATION CARDS



Here are some fun sayings that you might have found on an enunciation card in a school classroom. Can you say these really fast without getting your words "twisted"?

**1**

**A big black bug  
Bit the big black bear  
And the big black bear  
Bled blood**

**2**

**Sheep shouldn't  
Sleep in a shack.  
Sheep should  
Sleep in a shed.**

**3**

**Shiny silk sashes  
Shimmered when  
The sun shone on the  
Shop signs.**

**4**

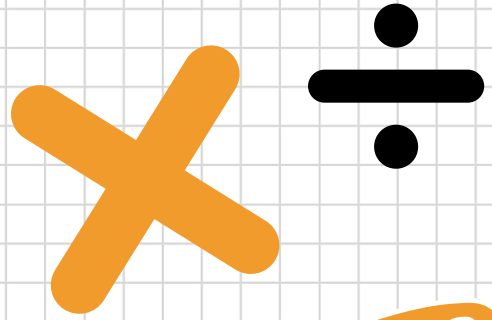
**A skunk sat on a stump.  
The stump thunk the skunk  
stunk,  
And the skunk thunk  
The stump stunk.**

**5**

**Two tutors who tooted the  
flute  
Tried to tutor two tutors to  
toot.  
Said the two to the tutors,  
"Is it harder to toot,  
Or to tutor two tooters to  
toot?"**



# MATH PROBLEMS



1. If one orange costs two cents, what will 3 oranges cost?

2. A wagon driver drove 15 miles in the forenoon, and 6 miles in the afternoon. How many miles did he travel?

3. A man worked 3 days for \$3.75. What were his daily wages?

4. A laborer earned \$1.25 per day. He was paid \$53.75. How many days did he work?

5. A gentleman, who had been away on a journey for 9 days, found on his return that he had spent \$36.00. How much did he spend per day?

## Answers for Math Problems

1. 6 cents
2. 21 miles
3. \$1.25 per day
4. 43 days
5. \$4 per day