

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, commencing in the early 1820s, written by Mrs. Kendrick, (daughter of James Cary, who was for many years a watchmaker and Jeweler in Brunswick, Maine.) Property of the Historical Society.

It was then a quiet unpretending little village, like all Maine places of the period, not a little isolated, but pleasant, comfortable to live in, its inhabitants still clinging to Puritan ideas and habits, honest thrift pervading the community, apparently free from envy of those more favored by fortune; the general idea seeming to be that the Creator knew what was best, giving to each person the situation good for him. The result a contentment greatly needed in these later days. There was great reverence for ministers, and the Churches they looked after. The Sabbath was very strictly kept, in a way that would be truly surprising in these modern times.

The first minister I remember about was the Rev. Asa Mead, a man of whom I have no personal memory, but bethink me of hearing older people talk of his trouble with College students, because of censuring a young man from the pulpit who came into the Student's Gallery on the north side of the old Church, as he, Mr. Mead, thought in an intoxicated condition, and his severe rash notice was at once resented by the students in a body, shown by violent scraping of the feet. Afterwards they hung him (Mr. M.) in effigy in the hay scales then standing at the foot of the Mall, made quite open at the sides, but having a roof, entirely unlike those of present times. Not contented with this, they made a

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

parody from the old song of Robert Kidd the pirate, then very common, beginning "My name was Asa Mead, and I preached and I preached, I insulted William Browne, and the scholars scraped me down," etc., etc. From hearing all this as a child, I got a settled idea, however good the Rev. Asa Mead might really be, he was unfortunate in having a quick temper not under proper control. But all this of the Rev. Mr. Mead's troubles is an aside memory.

It was specially desired I should give recollections, little as they might be, of private schools attended in early days. Then, as in times before, and in these later years, efforts were made for education, and the Village was divided into two large districts, pupils in each family counted, and taxed for support of the district they happened to be in, a public school in each district. That of the red school house situated on School Street, next west of where the Pejepscot Historical Rooms now are, was considered much the best of the two schools of that day, and many of the old inhabitants have remembered well early instructions got from it. The black school house at the foot of Federal Street, the district I belonged in, was not thought so well of, and I was never permitted to go to it.

In those days there were old dame schools for very young children, beside those ~~for~~ the older ones. My earliest recollections are of going to one of the old dame schools in a house then near the foot of Federal Street, west side, still standing, the another one has since been built beyond it, and I can still see just how the A B C's large and small, looked to me, as she pointed them out with her scissors while I stood by her side. She was kind and patient, and I soon progressed to the A b abs and to the great

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

attainment of spelling cat and dog. Meanwhile, by the way of learning to sew, (then expected to be taught to every little girl in a woman's school), I created the most wonderful quilt ever mortal beheld, pieces of all sizes sewed together in marvelous fashion, continued day after day till the accumulation got to be large enough for a quilt, and lasted a long time, till a half savage domestic with no taste for the "rich or rare," saw fit to appropriate and destroy it. Really a loss. A unique affair, "No harm, (as they used to say) to worship as it was unlike anything above, or below the earth," valuable only as a curiosity.

The next school I went to was kept by a young woman, probably more fond of companions of her own age than those of children, at least I only remember her as a sort of exalted character seated upon a high chair, sporting a good sized ferule, with which I was almost daily made acquainted regardless I thought then, and think now, of any real misdemeanor on my part. I do not remember her teaching me anything, but probably there was an attempt at something the frequent use of her ferule wholly obliterated. This school was kept in another room of the same house where I first went, but was afterward moved to the northeast front chamber of the (since) Forsaith House.

Next I went to a Mr. Knight, who kept a private school in a small building on the south side of Center Street, mostly for boys, but took girls too, to make out his number. I went to this school only a short time, and remember too little of it to have mentioned it at all. Only think some of the pupils older than myself, not overkind to me.

Then I went to a school in the old house on the north side of

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

School Street, still standing, and looking almost exactly as it used to, kept by Miss Elisa McLellan. Her school was a good one for children of my age. Of her I remember no ferules, only kindness, and she taught me with great patience niceties of sewing, and the embroidering of a sampler, then supposed a part of sewing education, and, with the sewing was mixed in reading, spelling, a little Arithmetic, Geography, etc.

I had then come to being nine years old, and remember well the coming of our new Minister, Mr. Adams with his family. They lived in what was then the Orr house, in the later days entirely made over, and owned now by the Skolfields. Of course the Adams family was of great interest to the entire community, and Fanny then four years old, (later on Mrs. Chamberlain) was a beautiful object in my eyes, arrayed in a scarlet dress trimmed with black velvet, and jaunty headgear to match. She was particularly fortunate in the thoroughly kind, lovely lady who had Mother charge of her, and in the choice man who took Father's care for her (being an adopted child). Mr. Adams was then a young, and very handsome man, seeming to me in my young days, as if he might be a real likeness of the living Christ, and since, seeing Hoffman's Christ picture being quite impressed with its looking so much like him. He was a lover of music with a fine natural, and cultivated voice for singing, which he ever used to make meetings more pleasant. A rare man of undoubted talents, disposed to find the best side of humanity, of whom it was said, "He had the wisdom of the serpent, with the harmlessness of the dove," His very faults, if he had any, "Leaning to Virtue's side." Always in the many funerals at which he officiated, if any good had existed in a person departed, sure to recognize it for encouragement,

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

and example for the living. Surely a place is fortunate to have been under such ministrations as his, for so long a time as forty years.

On the Sabbath in those days there were two services, morning and afternoon in the Church and a prayer meeting in the evening in the old conference room on Centre Street, now a dwelling house. Easily can I recall the visages of College Professors at these evening meetings, Professors Newman and Packard ever ready to assist Mr. Adams, while Professors Smyth and Upham were always near. Way back in the corner near the door sat black Phoebe seemingly a humble listener, having then and afterwards a reputation for great piety.

My recollections of Sabbath School begins with going to a meeting in the old red school house, when very young. Dea. Perry presided, and I think we were taught from the old Westminster Catechism, but don't remember much about it. In summer the school was always in the Church, (the one taken down for the present one to be built,) but in winter some of the teachers had their classes come to their homes, where they could be kept warm. In the Church Prof. Packard was superintendent of Sabbath School for many years, greatly interested in his work. His wife, Mrs. Packard, was my teacher for a long time, till I became old enough to join in a class of young ladies., Gov. Dunlap took charge of, which he made very interesting, and pleasant always to remember.

But to return to every day school, again. After Miss McLellan gave up hers on account of ill health, I became a pupil of the Owen School, kept at first in the long Owen house, on the site of which later on, Mr. Benjamin Greene built his house. For some reason unknown to me, the school was prosperous and soon moved to Washington

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

Hall in the old "Nichols Tavern House". The only lasting impression left me of the method of teaching in that school, is of being put in a class of much older girls to practice parsing in such works as Pope's Essay and Paradise Lost, without the least idea of how it was all to be done. We sat around a large table in the centre of the Hall, and when it came my turn, an older girl at my side would whisper me what to say, not at all correct I imagine, but satisfying our teacher perhaps just as well as if it was. This head of the school, called great Rachel, in distinction from a little Rachel Owen, was a woman I judge between 50 and 60 years old, who had piercing, snapping black eyes, and a temper easily disturbed by unthinking youngsters, and when thus disturbed, she would fasten the black eyes upon the culprit, and say in a very decisive tone of voice, "Very well Miss." As this happened often, it did not have a very powerful effect, or draw out much love either, for her of the black eyes.

Well do I remember the large building that stood on the spot where now is the Town Hall. It was known as the "Nichols Tavern House," but never used for such purposes in my day. Owned by Richard Dunlap, it was rented for many uses, especially for schools. I went to four in different parts of the house; first one, the Owen of which I've just written, kept in Washington Hall; second, to Asa Dodge who had the large northeast parlor for his school-room. He was an excellent teacher, not specially for me, as I was youngest of the flock, but in his efforts teaching the older pupils, with whom he took great pains, I have always felt I gained much. He was particularly good illustrating Natural Philosophy. That greatly interested me, simply as a looker on. Every morning after prayer and Scripture reading, (then usually considered a part of School duties) he read to us a half hour from Irving's, Life of Columbus, just published,

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

which I greatly enjoyed, that half hour of reading being to me a lasting delight.

From his young lady pupils he exacted frequent compositions to be read aloud, that I enjoyed very much, and I remember well some on the topic of novel reading, which was unsparingly condemned, excepting, perhaps, a few of Walter Scott's, then reaching our country, an entirely new style of fiction. Of course Mr. Dodge himself was believed to frown upon the sentimental, namby-pamby novels of that period without mercy. Mary Jane Melcher, a Miss Dunning, Hannah Perry, and the older daughter of Pres. Allen, wrote the compositions. The school became so popular it necessitated moving to the then Second Baptist Meeting House, (Pejepscot Historical Rooms now) and prospered long as Mr. Dodge saw fit to carry it on, but having decided upon missionary work for his life, he closed it, and departed for the field of his chosen labor. He was a graduate of Bowdoin College class of 1827, but did not live long for the work he intended doing.

My next school was in the Nichol's house kept by Miss Folsom, sister of Mrs. Adams, a noble woman. Of her I think it hardly possible to say too much good. She loved children, was patient, had great self control, and the gift of discerning and drawing out from small germs whatever of mental, or other good, pupils might have in them. Both my sister (several years younger) and myself, went to her years, and both of us ever retained strong love for her, and deep gratitude for the good she did us. Speaking of this school, an amusing little incident connected with the History Class occurs to me. A girl from the outskirts of the town was called upon to give

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

account of some battle. After preliminaries in which the fight was finished, she announced in a clear loud voice that "All the fleets went marching over the hills." Miss Folsom and all who heard of the wonderful performance laughed, but the damsel did not seem to be disturbed in the least, and from what I remember of her gifts, it seems quite probable she might have gone on in the years, always thinking such a feat possible.

For a short time, I went to a school kept by a Mr. Thomas Baker, in Washington Hall of the Nichols house, where I made a beginning of French, using Longfellow's grammar, translating afterwards from another work arranged by him. I liked the French, but did not like a boy's school which it was, with small number of girls.

After this, an English woman, Mrs. Fields, opened a Young Ladies' Boarding School in the fine old Porter house in Topsham, (still standing). It was extensively advertised as upon a new, desirable plan, for health, study, and deportment, and pupils came from many towns for the advantages. I too boarded in the establishment, winter of 1834. The school was really on a higher grade of teaching than was usual in this part of the world at that time. There were well qualified assistants for the different departments of study, and Mrs. Fields herself taught higher branches. She was a woman of some 50 or 60 years, well educated, and gifted with a power of entertaining that made her remarkably attractive. The stories she told both of England and this country, greatly interested her young hearers, and she devised many ways of amusing her pupils, keeping them from being homesick, had little dances in the school room evenings, she herself frequently playing the guitar for them to dance by. Often made pleasant companies to which Bowdoin College

Some Vague Reminiscences of Olden Times in Brunswick, Cont'd.

boys were invited, with other friends, giving a chance to youths of both institutions to practice deportment.

In those days the only way of warming houses was by large fires in open fireplaces, where quantities of best hard wood was daily consumed. In the mornings houses were cold, but of course grew warmer as the day went on, and by night were delightfully warm and pleasant. Mrs. Fields, a typical English woman, wearing a huge white cap, always sat in the schoolroom, by the side of the fireplace, a sort of presiding genius over the whole school, out of study hours amusing pupils with pleasing stories that have been allured to. But if truth be told, she was variable in her nature, and in some moods flattered favorites, and unjustly censured others. I loved justice, and this way of doing did not escape me. I found her daughter, Mrs. Beers, who taught me music, was far more reliable, and therefore to be more sincerely liked. This school flourished several years, and then with other earthly things went by.

In the summer of 1835 Miss Folsom and Miss Mary Dunning opened a school on the plan of the famous Ipswich School, then thought to be a model for all others, that I went to, and pupils came from other towns, boarding in different places. The school was kept in the fine old Dunning House, situated at the head of O'Brien St., since entirely made over, and now owned by Mrs. Adams. This school gave good satisfaction, but for some reason was not continued beyond the long term it was started for. Then Miss Folsom resumed in her old way, and both my sister and self were under her charge for a long time, ever thankful for the good training she gave us. For a short time I went to a school kept by a Mr. Goodenow, and now have come to the end of private schools I attended in Brunswick.