

Fosterville/Winegar, WI First School

This is the Fosterville/Winegar, WI first school, a one-room school house, built in 1906. A footprint of 20' x 32' with an 8' x 8' entrance to remove muddy shoes. The number of children at each grade level varied as the population increased in Winegar. This is a simple frame construction with a bell in the cupola. Contrary to popular belief wood frame schoolhouses were usually painted white, NOT red!

The blackboard was probably "black boards", made of wide planks painted black cut at the village Sawmill. It was not until much later that slate was used for chalkboards, although students often had individual slates to practice their writing.

The teachers that taught in these one-room, rural schools were very special people. During the winter months they would get to the school early to get a fire started in the potbelly stove, so the building would be warm for the students. It was so cold and snowy in Winegar at times it was necessary to wear snow shoes to get to the school which also required her to wear breeches. They even occasionally prepared a hot, noon meal on top of the stove, usually consisting of soup or stew of some kind. They took care of their students like a new mother hen would care for her newly hatched chicks; always looking out for their health and welfare.

A typical school day was 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with morning and afternoon recesses of 15 minutes each and an hour period for lunch. The older students were given the responsibility of bringing in water, carrying in coal or wood for the stove. The younger students would be given responsibilities according to their size and gender such as cleaning the black board, taking the erasers outside for dusting, plus, other duties that they were capable of doing.

Transportation for children who lived too far to walk was often provided by horse-drawn kid hack or sulky, which could only travel a limited distance in a reasonable amount of time each morning and evening, or students might ride a horse, these being put out to pasture in an adjoining paddock during the day. As time went by students would have ridden bicycles.

