

# Past Comes To Life In Mid-1800s Notes

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For this week's glimpse of the mid-19th century we are indebted to Daniel Nelson Raynor, who observed his 90th birthday last April. Mr. Raynor let us examine diaries and notes written by both his grandfathers--schoolmaster William, Benjamin Raynor and oysterman-wheelwright Andrew Rhodes.

Now a resident of Port Jervis, N.Y., the pair's grandson spent his early boyhood in Freeport, then moved with his parents, the John Fletcher Raynors, to Huntington where he learned printing at the Long Islander (weekly newspaper) plant. He became editor of the Roslyn News and Long Island editor of the Brooklyn Daily Times before joining the Union - Gazette staff half a century ago at Port Jervis. After long service as the Union-Gazette's managing editor he retired, but accepted the post of City Historian five years ago. Grandpa William B. Raynor's

neat handwriting tells when and where he taught school. Fortunately he was also a farmer, oysterman and occasionally a dealer in merchandise, with resources other than a schoolmaster's salary.)

Born in 1801, this civic-spirited teacher helped to establish the local Methodist Church, serving as first class trustee, Sunday School superintendent, and then leader of the church trustees until he died in 1869. His son John Fletcher Raynor succeeded him as leader. John married Ann Aramilla Rhodes, daughter of Andrew Rhodes.

Tuition for the public school cost a cent and a half per day -- payable only if a student ("scholar" in those days) attended. Parents received a separate bill for fuel, as the cost went up in severely cold weather. The teacher got some wood and then a man had to be paid to saw it into usable pieces for the classroom stove. Pupils could buy quill pens, usually five for

a cent.

Busy Raynortown farms had a way of discouraging attendance at school -- especially among the boys. How could farmers, dependent upon their children's help, afford to do without the strength and energy of young sons? It's hardly surprising that girls had better attendance during the quarter-year starting in July, 1944: Amanda Raynor 68 1/2 days, Phebe Raynor 66 1/2 days, and Sarah Raynor 66 days. Classes were held in a one-room school at Main and Church Streets near where the Spanish-American War cannon now stands.

The teacher recorded when each quarter-year term began. His introduction to the field of public education started Aug. 28, 1843 in the Roosevelt District, known as District 8. After nine months he transferred to his home school, District 9, on July 29, 1844. Next came a switch to East Meadow District 3 on Dec. 17, followed by return to Raynortown March 31, 1845 for six months. A three-month lull during the harvest season ensued before Mr. Raynor started a quarter in East Meadow the first of December.

Daniel Smith's house was turned into an educational center when the teacher went to work in Raynortown Nov. 23, 1846 and again in 1847. Then he took a school assignment in Roosevelt for two years. On Jan 19, 1852 we find him serving in North Merrick and North Bellmore (District 4) and returning to Raynortown the half-year commencing June 24, 1852. A sort of sabbatical year was enjoyed in 1853. Districts 4 and 8 shared Mr. Raynor's teaching at various times in 1854 and the early weeks of 1855.

## Rhodes Property Rented

Daniel Nelson Raynor's other grandfather -- Andrew Rhodes -- was also a religious man. This trait shows clearly in his account books, which contain many worshipful comments written in the margins and squeezed into nearly all available space between bookkeeping columns. There and on separate sheets of paper the wheelwright wrote about his family, the weather, local happenings and his reactions to life's problems.

Next: Andy Rhode's Freeport