

## SUMMIT ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

The first settlers in Summit arrived about the same time that the state legislated “An act for the encouragement of schools” in 1795. This law became the corner stone of the elementary school system.

In 1839, Summit peaked at 21 school districts that were spaced out about two or three miles from each other. All schools had a district number but would soon take on a common name that pertained to their location. In 1866 the districts numbering 1-17 were: Cornell (joint with Otsego), Summit Village, Snook, Gould (joint with Otsego), Dugway (joint with Delaware & Otsego), Wharton, Crapser Hollow, J. Howie, A. Rifembark, Beards Hollow, E. Gallup, Conaro, Barger, Charlotteville, Arabia, Lutheranville and Baptist Church (with Otsego). The most commonly heard of schools that were operating into the early 1900's were Summit village, Eminence, Dugway, Sawyer Hollow, Enid, Wharton Hollow, Beards Hollow, Lutheranville, Baptist Church, Oliver and Charlotteville. Of these schools the first three are gone, the next six were transformed into residences, and the last two are restored to their original beauty.

The original 12 districts were formed by the town school commissioners in 1820 following the creation of Summit in 1819. Eight of the districts were solely in Summit and four were “parts of districts” that were shared with Otsego County or bordering towns. For instance, Eminence school was #8 in Summit, #10 in Jefferson and #1 or 2 in Blenheim. Districts were continually altered in size, added, re-numbered, consolidated or annexed all through the years. The Commissioners of common schools of the Town of Summit who helped set up some additional districts in 1824 were Lott Comstock, John Johnson and Peter Warner (this is the earliest year I found with legible town minutes).

Most communities within Summit had some form of a school before the state requested that all towns create school districts in 1812 (an 1814 amendment required that districts be established) but they would have listed as being in the towns Summit was created from. There were some log cabin schools, but more likely school would take place in someone's house and pupils would receive instruction from a knowledgeable type person. School was usually in session for a few months in the summer and a few in the winter.

A typical school was about 24'X30', had two doors (one for girls and one for boys), cloak room, blackboard, recitation bench, globe, desks, library and woodstove. Less than half of the schools had privies/outhouses. The school day was from 9AM-4PM (included two breaks and an hour for lunch) and usually a half day on Saturday. The day often started out with a song and prayer and after 1895 the pledge to the 45 star American flag.

Students could be ages 3-21 but the usual age range was 6-12. In the 1833 school district minutes there were 602 scholars in 20 districts (half the districts were joint with Jefferson, Worcester, Blenheim, Cobleskill, Fulton and Harpersfield). The least amount of scholars in one school was 6 and the most was 79 in district #2 (I believe this was the Summit Village school). More students went to school in the winter when the farm chores were less. School

trustees would try to hire a male teacher for the winter session in order to handle the extra boys. In 1863 male teachers averaged \$18 per month, exclusive of board, and women \$12. The following are teachers, that I know of so far, from the Sawyer Hollow School: Jessie K. Dingman 1889, Luman Carl 1891, Jerome Toles and David Fancher 1892, Anna Terpenning 1908, and Hazel Palmer was probably the last teacher in the 1930's.

Apportionment of Summit school money for the year 1823 was \$170.35. Of this amount \$84.75 was collected from the County Treasurer (which originated from the state) and \$85.60 was received from the Town collector. Sixteen years later the monies totaled about \$340. The rate-bill was in effect up until 1867 when schools became free for all. The rate-bill was levied upon parents in proportion to the number of days their children attended school.

The oldest deed on record is for Charlottesville District #4 (this school was across the street from Charlottesville #14, which currently stands refurbished). The deed is dated 1843 and the property was sold to the district by Jacob Hoffman and wife. There are only deeds, at the county clerk's office, for 12 of the 21 schools which was not uncommon as people often allowed schools to be built without anything in writing. The last one room (it is actually a two room, I believe the only two room in Summit) schoolhouse to close in Summit was Charlottesville #14, 1894-1951.

Through the years the one room schools have been referred to as little red or white schoolhouse, district school, common school, rural school or first six grades. No matter what they were called, they all did their best to educate the youth in their communities.

Karen Cuccinello

Summit Town Historian

The Summit Town Hall happens to have the best collection of old records that I have seen in my travels looking for schoolhouse information. The collection includes School Statistics books that I utilized for most of the Summit specific factual information.

PS Please contact me at [karenc@midtel.net](mailto:karenc@midtel.net) or 518-287-1945 if you know of any Schoharie County one room schoolhouse teachers.



Charlottesville, Summit #14  
Located at its original site 2010



Oliver Summit #3,  
Located at the Old Stone Fort Complex , 2010