



# Teacher's Guide Spring of 1939 Program



Reed School class and teacher, Mrs. Orvilla Selves Zillic, in 1947, WHS - Image ID 45011

## Reed School historic site

US-10 and Cardinal Av  
Neillsville, WI

*The Reed School Historic Site is located at the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 10 and Cardinal Avenue, approximately 3 miles east of downtown Neillsville, WI.*

For the quickest response about reservations or information about Reed School, please contact us by email, phone, or the following mailing address:

[reedschool@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:reedschool@wisconsinhistory.org)  
(608) 253-3523

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**Dear Educator:**

Thank you for choosing to find more information about the Reed School owned and operated by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The Reed School served as a country one-room schoolhouse from 1915 through 1951. It is typical of the more than 6,000 one-room schools that once dotted Wisconsin's countryside. The Reed School exemplifies the single room, multi-grade school that formed the basis of this nation's educational system for rural children in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century.

Located on US-10, approximately three miles east of Neillsville in Clark County, the Reed School offers a unique interpretation of country school life. Most one-room school museums focus on nineteenth-century education, whereas the Reed School interprets the first half of the twentieth century. The educational program offered to school groups examines a brief period from this half century – the spring of 1939.

During your visit, students will be asked to participate, to imagine, to think, and to compare and contrast school life of the past with that of the present.

This Teacher's Guide contains background information to assist you in preparing your students to visit the Reed School and suggestions for activities that can be conducted before and after your visit.

The program is designed for fourth-grade students and connects to Wisconsin Model Academic Standards.

## **Connections to the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards Grade 4**

### **English: Writing**

B.4.1 Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes – Write expressive pieces in response to reading, viewing, and life experiences (narrative letters) employing descriptive detail and a personal voice.

### **Social Studies: Geography**

A.4.5 Use atlases, databases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps to gather information about the local community, Wisconsin, the United States, and the world.

### **Social Studies: History**

B.4.1 Identify and examine sources of information that are used for constructing an understanding of the past, such as artifacts, documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, paintings, architecture, oral presentations, graphs and charts.

### **Social Studies: Political Science and Citizenship**

C.4.3. Explain how families, schools, and other groups develop, enforce, and change rules of behavior and explain how various behaviors promote or hinder cooperation.

### **Social Studies: Behavioral Science**

E.4.5 Identify and describe institutions such as school, church, police, and family and describe their contributions to the well being of the community, state, nation, and global society.

## **Reed School Mission Statement**

*Reed School preserves and interprets the history of the one-room school as the primary form of education for rural Wisconsin children in the first half of the twentieth century.*

## **Program Goals**

By participating in the Reed School Spring of 1939 program, students will:

- Experience school as taught in a multi-grade, one-room rural school in the spring of 1939.
- Gain insight into the similarities and differences of how and what children were taught during this period compared to the present day.
- Enhance their understanding of daily life of children in late-depression era, rural Wisconsin.

## Historic Information

### Rural Education

From the early 1800s to the 1950s, rural children received their education in one-room schoolhouses throughout Wisconsin. In each school, one teacher instructed all grades of students, first through eighth. These multi-grade schools, sometimes referred to as ungraded classrooms, could enroll as many as 50 students.

Though not without its challenges, this learning environment enabled children to learn from one another, both by assisting the younger students and watching the older ones. One-room schools placed a strong emphasis on values and patriotism and instilled in students a sense of responsibility and a strong work ethic.

While rural school children attended one-room schools, their urban counterparts went to larger schools with classrooms divided by grade. By the late 1930s, these schools usually offered a broader curriculum and access to amenities lacking in country schools – running water, electricity and central heating, for example.

To attend high school, rural students had to travel many miles by bus or sometimes board in a nearby town. While a majority of urban children completed high school, farm children did not always do so, choosing instead to remain on their family farm.

Rural and urban students' diverging access to education and resources eventually led to an effort to close one-room schoolhouses nationwide. Transportation improvements made in the early twentieth century now made school consolidation possible. In Wisconsin, the legislature passed laws in 1939 and again in 1949 with the explicit goal of consolidating rural school districts. By the 1960s, nearly all one-room schoolhouses in the state had closed their doors.

### Spring of 1939

By the spring of 1939, Wisconsinites, like Americans in general, were slowly pulling themselves out of the grip of the Great Depression.



School bus picking up rural high school students, April 14, 1939, Wisconsin Historical Society Collection

The 1929 stock market crash had launched a severe economic crisis that lasted through the 1930s. Millions of Americans found themselves unemployed, with those residing in urban areas being hardest hit. Though meager at times, farming provided rural people with both income and access to food despite the economic depression.

Wages slowly rose as the decade advanced. At the Reed School, Miss Norma Schmoll received a monthly salary of \$87.50 to teach during the 1938-39 school year. Nine years earlier, the Reed School teacher in 1929-30 earned \$110.00 per month!

Life, however, was surprisingly “modern” in 1939. Automobiles raced along newly paved highways. Electric lines marched through rural communities across the state enabling many farms and country schools to replace their kerosene gas lamps with electric light bulbs. Radio broadcasts reached many of these communities, providing rural people with greater access to news, education and entertainment.

Yet, in other respects daily life in rural Wisconsin during the late 1930s had altered little since the nineteenth century. Many farmers still followed the farm practices of their fathers and grandfathers, milking cows by hand and using horses for power. Modernization did not carry over to indoor plumbing and gas or electric heating.

## The Reed School

The School Board of Grant Township District 1 authorized the construction of the Reed School in 1915 to replace the school that burned down in February of the previous year. The new concrete “brick” structure, measuring 30 feet x 50 feet, was relatively unusual for the World War I time period. The outside surface of each concrete brick consisted of a row of 3 low-relief pyramids. The school boasted of a concrete foundation and a wood-frame bell tower. Undoubtedly, the Pleasant Ridge community that encompassed the Reed School took pride in its new schoolhouse.



Reed School, 1917-18

Though a “modern up-to-date building” for its time, the Reed School lacked some basic amenities of today. The school did not have indoor plumbing and the property never had a well. Students utilized two outhouses in the schoolyard, one for girls and the other for boys. Drinking water had to be carried by milk can from a neighboring farm. Electricity didn’t come until 1941.

The Gordon V. and Helen C. Smith Foundation of Potomac, Maryland purchased, restored and endowed the Reed School. The Foundation donated the Reed School to the Wisconsin Historical Society in 2007.

Between 1915 and 1951, hundreds of Pleasant Ridge students received their education at the Reed School. In the spring of 1939, Miss Norma Schmoll, in her second year of teaching there, taught a large class, probably numbering 33 students. She remained at the Reed School for three more years; only one other Reed School teacher taught at the school longer.

School was suspended after the 1950-51 school year and Reed School students transferred to other nearby schools including Washington, Wild Rose, Kurth and Neillsville. Amongst considerable opposition from the community, the Reed School officially closed in 1954 due to school consolidation.

## Pre-Visit Classroom Activities

There are five pre-visit classroom activities listed in this Teacher's Guide and summarized below.

### 1. Dress-up 1930s Style (p. 11)

To enhance your students' experience, ask them to visit the Reed School dressed in clothing appropriate for rural school children in the 1930s. Use the descriptions provided along with the historical images to get ideas.



Golden Rod School - 1937 Carl Worchel - Teacher

This is an example of what rural students wore to school in the late 1930s. Golden Rod School was located in neighboring Lynn Township. Collection of Clark County, WI Internet Library

### 2. Pack a 1930s Lunch (p. 12)

Students brought their lunches to school, often in metal lard or syrup pails with holes punched in them for ventilation. Your students can make their own lunch pails using coffee, shortening or unused paint cans and then pack a lunch typical of the 1930s time period.

The Reed School does not have a well. Historically, a local farmer brought water to the school daily and students drank from a ceramic water jug. When you visit, water will be available for your class, but students and chaperones should bring a container to drink from such as a tin cup, ceramic mug or glass jar. To assist parents in preparing for their child's Reed School visit, a **Parent Fact Sheet is provided on page 13** of this Teacher's Guide. You may wish to distribute the fact sheet to parents along with your school's permission form.

### 3. "Back to School" Sale (p. 14)

Before the start of the school year, rural students traveled to nearby towns to purchase school supplies. Given its close proximity, most Reed School students probably visited Neillsville to conduct their "back to school" shopping.

On August 25, 1938, the Schultz Bros. Company of Neillsville advertised a "School Opening Sale, Back-to-School Lessons in Major Savings" in *The Clark County Press* newspaper. Using this advertisement (p.15), have your students compare and contrast the types of school supplies utilized in the 1930s with those used today.

### 4. There and Back (pp. 16-17)

The walk to school and back was part of the rural educational process – walking being the primary means of transportation for most farm children even in the 1930s.

Your students can imagine what rural children might have encountered and experienced on their walk to school. Read the two oral histories to your class (Recollections, p. 17) that describe this journey and view the enclosed historical photographs. Then, each student can write a short creative essay describing his/her imaginary walk to school. Please bring your students' essays with you to the Reed School so they can be used in a lesson during your site visit.

### 5. School Work (pp. 18-26)

One-room country schools instilled values in students through hard work, discipline and responsibility. Teachers needed and expected students to contribute to the successful operation of the school room by performing a variety of duties. Ask your students to brainstorm and come up with a list of school chores that students in the 1930s would have performed. Then discuss how and why students performed these jobs. To foster this notion of responsibility, your class will be asked to perform "school work" during its visit to the Reed School. Each task is detailed in the lesson. You may choose to review the jobs and assign individuals to each duty or distribute the assignments randomly.

## During Your Visit

The Reed School Spring of 1939 educational program has two primary components. A portion of the day is designed to recreate 1939 school life. Your class will participate in lessons and games from this period. The second segment of the day requires your students to analyze primary source materials, specifically newspapers and maps, to further their understanding of school life in the late 1930s.

Please allow approximately 4 hours for your site visit. If you have time constraints, please contact the Reed School in advance and the program can be adjusted to meet your needs. Please note that the times provided below are offered only as guidelines and may vary.

### **Arrival (30 minutes)**

Upon your arrival to the Reed School, please have your class immediately use the toilet facilities in the schoolyard located next to the parking lot. The school building does not have indoor plumbing. Students and chaperones can use a new "outhouse," the wheelchair accessible building with a compost toilet. With only two toilet facilities, you may need to encourage your class to hurry.

The Reed School interpreter will come outside to greet you during this time and to briefly discuss the schedule for the day or answer any questions that you may have. If the weather is poor, your class can wait in the basement of the school and take turns using the toilet facilities. The school day will commence with the raising of the American flag, the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of "America."

### **Morning Lessons (1 hour)**

Your class will spend the morning doing lessons typical of a one-room, multi-grade school in the late 1930s. Rural schools at this time placed a strong emphasis on reading and writing (including spelling, handwriting, and proper use of English in speaking and writing), and arithmetic.

### **Lesson 1 – Reading (30 minutes)**

As a class, your students will memorize and recite Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's classic poem "The Village Blacksmith," to demonstrate the use of recitation as a method of instruction.

### **Lesson 2 – Handwriting (10 minutes)**

Your students will do handwriting drills using the Palmer method to show the importance placed on cursive writing.

### **Lesson 3 – Arithmetic (10 minutes)**

Various exercises involving addition and subtraction, multiplication flash cards and story problems will be used to demonstrate to your students how a multi-grade classroom functioned.

### **Questions and Answers (10 minutes)**

The morning will conclude with a short question and answer session.

### **"Noon hour" (40 minutes – 1 hour)**

Students can eat their lunches for the first 20 minutes of the "noon hour," followed by a 20 to 40 minute recess, depending on the length of your visit. During the recess break your students can participate in organized games that were played by rural school children.

In nice weather, lunch and recess will take place outdoors, so please ask your students to dress accordingly. If it is cold or rainy, your students can remain inside recess and eat lunch at their desks as it was historically done.

### **Afternoon Lessons (1 hour 10 minutes)**

#### **Lesson 1 – Art – Wisconsin School of the Air's "Let's Draw" Program (15 minutes)**

Your class will listen and draw to a portion of the popular "Let's Draw" radio program, which was used to instruct rural Wisconsin students in the 1930s and beyond.

### **Lesson 2 – Social Studies – Historians in the Making (25 minutes)**

By examining an edition of *The Clark County Press* newspaper, students can conduct their own research about local, state, national and international events that occurred in the spring of 1939.

### **Lesson 3 – Geography – Where is the Reed School? (15 minutes)**

Students can use their map reading skills to gather information about the Reed School and its surrounding area.

### **Reflections of the School Day (15 minutes)**

Your class should take a few minutes to reflect on the school day. Students will be invited to read their “There and Back” (Pre-Visit Classroom Activity – Lesson 4) essays to the class and to discuss their experiences at the Reed School.

### **Commencement (10 minutes)**

Your class will hear a portion of the commencement speech given to the 1939 eighth-grade graduates of the Reed School, which stressed character and opportunity.

Historically, students received a graduation certificate upon successful completion of the eighth grade. At the end of your visit, your students will likewise receive certificates to share with their families and serve as reminders of their spring of 1939 experience.

Please bring a list of your students’ names to write on the graduation certificates.

### **Reed School Exhibits**

If time permits, your class is encouraged to view the exhibits in the basement of the Reed School. Please note that this space is not wheelchair accessible. Exhibit materials can be provided in an alternate format.

## **Follow-up Activities**

To reinforce your site visit, here are a few suggested activities for you and your students to complete together. Detailed instructions are provided in this Teacher’s Guide for the first two activities.

### **1. Hectograph Copies (p. 24)**

Your class can experiment with a copying technique used in schools in the 1930s by making a hectograph “machine.”

### **2. Class Newspaper (p. 25)**

Your students can write articles and make a class newspaper to document school life of today.

### **3. Spelling Bee**

Many country school teachers held spelling bees as a way to make spelling more exciting to their students. Hold a spelling bee in your classroom with the spelling words that your students studied on the Reed School’s blackboard (see Appendix 3 – Spelling Words). See if multi-grade learning took place. Do students do well on all the spelling words, even those that were assigned to other grades?

### **4. “Wisconsin School of the Air” Radio Programs**

If your class enjoyed listening to the “Wisconsin School of the Air” radio broadcast during your site visit, there are two additional programs available on CD for you to borrow. Listen to the popular “Journeys in Musicland” program led by Professor Edgar B. “Pop” Gordon or “Visit a Fish Hatchery” during the “Afield With Ranger Mac” program with Wakelin McNeel as “Ranger Mac.” For information on obtaining a copy of these programs, please call (608) 253-3523.

## **Evaluation**

Please take a few minutes to complete and return the enclosed evaluation form (p. 26). We would like to know what you and your students thought of the Spring of 1939 program at the Reed School.

## Resources

### Children's Books

Pringle, Laurence. *One Room School*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, Inc., 1998.

Ray, Delia. *Ghost Girl: A Blue Ridge Mountain Story*. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 2003.

Sandin, Joan. *Coyote School News*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2003.

Swain, Gwenyth. *Chig and the Second Spread*. New York: Delacourte Press, 2003.

Tripp, Valerie. *Kit Learns a Lesson: 1934 A School Story*. Middleton, WI: American Girl Publishing, 2000.

### Online Resources

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/>  
The Wisconsin Historical Society collection of online historical images.

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/depression-wwii.html>  
The National Archives offers teaching plans based on important historical documents in its collection.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>  
The Library of Congress' Prints and Reading Room has a collection of photographs on-line from the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information that document America from the Great Depression to World War II.

<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell>  
The Blackwell History of Education Museum at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois offers a 1930s school program and has additional activity and lesson plans.

<http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org>  
Wessel's Living History Farm offers detailed information about farming in the 1920s, 1930s and 1930s.

### Printed Resources

Apps, Jerry. *One-Room Country Schools: History and Recollections*. Woodruff, WI: The Guest Cottage, Inc., 1996.

Fuller, Wayne E. *One-Room Schools of the Middle West: An Illustrated History*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994.

Davidson, Randall. *9XM Talking: WHA Radio and the Wisconsin Idea*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, c. 2006.

The Wisconsin Cartographers' Guild. *Wisconsin's Past and Present: A Historical Atlas*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

Thompson, William Fletcher. *The History of Wisconsin. Volume VI: Continuity and Change, 1940-1965*. Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many one-room school museums and historic sites who shared their educational plans.

Several lesson plan concepts as well as historical research in the Spring of 1939 program came from the Blackwell History of Education Museum.

The historical information provided in this Teacher's Guide was based in large part on Jerry App's book *One-Room Country Schools: History and Recollections*. Several lessons and activities were derived from this publication as well.

## Teacher's Checklist

- Complete pre-visit classroom activities:**
  - 1. Dress up 1930s Style
  - 2. Pack a 1930s Lunch
  - 3. "Back to School" Sale
  - 4. There and Back
  - 5. School Work
- Send out Parent Fact Sheet**
- Confirm that students and chaperones have **unbreakable drinking cups and sack lunches**
- Bring copy of **essays** from Lesson 4  
There and Back
- Bring Lesson 5 "School Work"  
**slips of paper assignments** to  
redistribute to your class
- Bring **list of students' names** to write on  
graduation certificates



## Pre-Visit Classroom Activity

### Lesson 1

### Dress-up 1930s Style

#### Objective

To enhance your students' experience at the Reed School by dressing in school clothing similar to that worn by rural children in the late 1930s.

#### Directions

*Examine the historical images (Images 2 through 11) provided in Appendix 1 – School Scenes with your class and ask students to describe the clothing worn by school children in the 1930s. Write their answers on the blackboard in two columns, boys and girls. Encourage them to pay attention to all the details. How did they wear/style their hair? What did children wear in warm weather versus cold weather? What types of shoes and socks did they wear? Then read to your class the historical information provided.*

*Encourage students to visit the Reed School dressed as 1930s school children. The Parent Fact Sheet (p. 11) includes a brief description of period clothing so that students can work with their parents in finding appropriate clothes to wear for their site visit. You and your chaperones are encouraged to come dressed as students from the 1930s as well.*

#### Historical Information

During the depression years, few farm families had enough money to purchase new clothes at a store. Mothers sewed patches over holes in clothes, mended socks, and "recycled" and reused clothing whenever possible. Farm women utilized the large flour or livestock feed sacks as material to sew everything from girls' dresses to boys' shirts.

Typically, the boys wore long-sleeve button shirts with collars and overalls or blue jeans (sometimes with suspenders) to school. During warmer weather, they could roll up their shirt sleeves or remove their shirts entirely. They wore socks and tie shoes, sometimes that covered the ankle, and in the warmer months, went without socks and shoes entirely.

The girls wore dresses to school typically with collars. The dresses had short sleeves in warmer weather and long sleeves in colder. Girls wore socks and lace-up or buckle shoes that did not cover the ankle, or like the boys, did not wear shoes and socks in the warmer months.



## Pre-Visit Classroom Activity

Lesson 2

Pack a 1930s Lunch

### Objective

To gain a better understanding of life in the 1930s by learning about the types of foods that farm children brought with them to school for lunch.

### Directions

*Read and discuss the historical information provided. Together, make a list on the blackboard of the types of food school children would have brought.*

*Your students can make their own lunch pail using a three-pound shortening can or a large coffee can. If a coffee can is used, cover the sides with butcher paper. Punch holes for the handle and for ventilation by using a hammer and nail. Fasten a piece of wire or heavy twine through the top two holes for the handle and cover the top with scrap material. School cafeterias can be a good source for cans or contact a local hardware store to see if it has unused paint cans available. In lieu of making lunch pails, your students could also bring their lunches in brown paper bags.*

*When preparing lunch, here are a few suggestions of what to include:*

- *jelly sandwiches*
- *hard-boiled eggs*
- *cheese or meats*
- *homemade bread*
- *locally-grown fruits and vegetables (fresh if in season, or dried or canned)*

*Food should be wrapped in brown paper or butcher paper since plastic food wrap, sandwich bags and aluminum foil were not yet available.*

*You could also ask some parents and/or chaperones to assist you in preparing a group lunch and pack a period picnic for your entire class.*

### Historical Information

Students brought their lunches to school, often in metal lard or syrup pails with holes punched in it for ventilation or in brown paper bags. Although fancy manufactured lunch boxes were commercially available at this time, most families could not afford to purchase them.

In general, farm families ate what they themselves produced or what was produced in the region in which they lived. Their food tended to be homemade rather than store bought. Items such as peanut butter, oranges and bananas were rare.

A typical lunch might include a few jelly sandwiches or chili or soup in the winter months (which would be warmed in a pan of water on top of the wood-burning stove), an apple if it was fall time, a sugar cookie, and fresh milk. Chocolate syrup sometimes was mixed with the milk to make chocolate milk.



## Parent Fact Sheet

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Dear Parents,

Your child will be traveling to the Reed School Historic Site for a field trip. Located just east of Neillsville in Clark County on US-10, the Reed School offers a half-day educational program for fourth-grade students centered on the spring of 1939. Students will learn about life in rural Wisconsin at this time, and experience school life as it was taught in a multi-grade (grades first through eighth) one-room schoolhouse. The Reed School, owned and operated by the Wisconsin Historical Society, is a one-room rural school that operated in Wisconsin from 1915-1951 and is typical of the more than 6,000 schools that once dotted Wisconsin's countryside. One-room schoolhouses formed the basis of this nation's educational system for rural children in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century.

To enhance the experience, **students are encouraged to come dressed in clothing like that worn by rural students in the 1930s.** Girls wore short or long-sleeve dresses, usually with collars, socks, and lace-up or buckle shoes that did not cover the ankle. Boys wore long-sleeve button shirts with collars, overalls or blue jeans (with or without suspenders), socks and tie shoes, which sometimes covered the ankle. Keep in mind that money was very tight during this decade, as Americans still had not fully recovered from the Great Depression. Few farm families could afford to purchase new clothes at a store. Mothers sewed patches over holes in clothes, mended socks, and "recycled" and reused clothing whenever possible.

To further add to the day's authenticity, **we suggest that your child pack a 1930s-style lunch.** Farm families ate what they themselves produced. Their food was homemade rather than store bought. Here are a few suggestions for your child's lunch:

- sandwiches on homemade bread with meat (not deli), cheese or jelly
- hard-boiled eggs
- locally-grown fruits and vegetables (fresh, if in season, or dried or canned)

Items such as peanut butter, oranges and bananas were rare. Food should be wrapped in brown paper or butcher paper since plastic food wrap, sandwich bags, and aluminum foil were not available in the 1930s. Students can place their lunches in either a brown paper bag or a lunch pail, which they may have made at school.

Historically, the Reed School did not have water on the property. A local farmer brought in water to the school each day. Drinking water will be provided, but **students need to bring an unbreakable cup from home,** such as a tin cup. Do not bring breakable glasses or mugs!

Also please be aware that the Reed School does not have indoor plumbing. Students will use a new "outhouse," which is a building with a compost toilet (wheelchair accessible).

Thank you for your assistance in making this a fun, educational experience for your child.



## Pre-Visit Classroom Activity

### Lesson 3

### “Back to School” Sale

#### Objective

To compare and contrast the types of school supplies that students utilized in the 1930s with those used today.

#### Directions

*Read the historical information section to your students and ask them to think about what supplies a student from the 1930s might need at school. You could write their responses on the blackboard. Then distribute a copy of the August 25, 1938 Schultz Bros. Company advertisement from The Clark County Press newspaper to each of your students. Give them a few minutes to review the advertisement and then lead a discussion. Discussion questions could include:*

- *How did the items listed in the advertisement compare with your expectations?*
- *What, if anything, surprised you about the supplies listed?*
- *In what ways are the school supplies similar or different than those that you use now?*
- *How do the prices compare with the prices of school supplies today?*
- *How do you think the school supplies purchased by urban school children differed from the supplies of rural children attending a one-room school?*
- *How are the text books and teaching aids used in the 1930s similar or different than those used today?*

#### Historical Information

Some rural one-room schools required that students purchase their own text books. Other schools, like the Reed School, provided the books free of charge, but a student who misused or destroyed a book had to replace it. Schools sometimes charged rent to the students for use of text books, something that the school board at the Reed School considered doing in 1937, but ultimately rejected the idea.

Though the specific text books used by one-room schools varied, some of the more popular choices included the song book *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs*; readers like *The Progressive Course in Reading*, *Elson-Gray Basic Reader* and the Dick and Jane series of readers; and spellers such as J.N. Hunt's *Progressive Course in Spelling Complete*. Besides text books, some teachers utilized the Sears Roebuck Catalog as a reader, an encyclopedia, and for arithmetic lessons. Other teaching aids included flash cards, globes, radio programs and school libraries.

Before the start of the school year, students traveled to town to purchase text books, if necessary, and other supplies for the upcoming school year. Many Reed School students undoubtedly traveled to nearby Neillsville to conduct their shopping.

# Back to School Ad

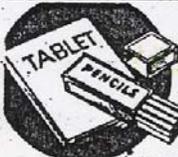
August 25, 1938 Schultz Bros. Company advertisement from the Clark County Press

## SCHOOL OPENING SALE



# Schultz Bros. Company

Everything in School Supplies on Hand at all Times!

<b>LEAD PENCILS</b> with Erasers 5 for <b>5c</b> <b>Gilt Tip PENCILS</b> with oversized Erasers 2 for <b>5c</b> <b>CRAYOLAS</b> 6 in box ..... 5c 8 in box ..... 10c 16 in box ..... 15c	 <b>Crayons and Crayolas</b> Paints for Every Type of School Work <b>Semi-Moist Water Colors</b> Set of Eight <b>20c</b> 	<b>Girls' Print HANDKERCHIEFS</b> 2 for ..... 5c <b>Boys' Woven HANDKERCHIEFS</b> ..... 5c <b>Rite-Rite MECHANICAL PENCIL</b> Repel, Expel, Propel Each <b>10c</b> <b>PENCIL LEADS</b> 18 in. Tube <b>5c</b> <b>Crayola DRAWING CRAYONS</b> 16 in Box ..... 10c <b>Blendwell—Old Faithful</b> 16 in box ..... 10c
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**Neillville** --- **Wisconsin**



## Pre-Visit Classroom Activity

### Lesson 4

### There and Back

### Objective

To use primary sources and creative writing as tools to better understand the lives of rural school children in the late 1930s.

### Directions

*Read the historical information to your students and lead a discussion about walking to and from school and how this differs from today. Display or pass around the historical images in Appendix 2 – Rural Scenes.*

*Then read the following oral history accounts about walking to school. Ask your students to close their eyes and to try to experience what each person is describing. After they have listened to the recollections, ask your students to write a brief creative essay detailing their own imaginary walk to school. Encourage them to think about the following: did they walk with someone; was it spring, winter or fall; what did they see or touch on the way; what route did they travel; and what were they thinking or feeling?*

*When the students have completed the assignment, collect the essays and bring them with you to the Reed School. Students can volunteer to read their essays to the class during one of the classroom lesson plans. Several essays may be chosen to be displayed on the bulletin board in the schoolhouse for other classes and the general public to view.*

### Historical Information

The walk to school and back was part of the rural educational process – walking being the primary form of transportation for most farm children. When choosing a location to build their schoolhouse, farmers typically selected a central location. Even so, some students still had to walk two miles or more just to get to school and an equal distance to get home. They walked in all extremes of weather.

By the 1930s, some families and teachers had cars. A lucky child might get a ride from time to time, sometimes on a passing milk truck, but most students continued to walk to school just as in the past. After completing their morning chores, students set off from their family farm alongside younger and/or older siblings, and then met up with classmates along the way. It was not unusual for them to take their time and explore the environment or take part in “nature study” on their way to school.

Students would meet in the schoolyard and play with their classmates until it was time for school to start. The teacher would ring a warning bell to alert students still on their way to school that they needed to hurry or risk being late. Another bell would follow soon after, this one signaling the start of the school day.



## Recollections

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### **Mary Bray, who attended a one-room county school in Walworth County in the early 1940s described her experience walking:**

One of the most delightful parts of those long ago days was the walk to school. To go by the road would be two plus miles, but it was shortened by going cross lots – trespassing by today's rules.

We would go down the long lane-like driveway to Anderson's Resort and along the shore of Turtle Lake, checking to see what washed up dead or alive along the shoreline. Sometimes all we'd see would be maybe a turtle or snake resting itself. Then we crawled through a fence to pass the only other dwelling on that side of the lake. Here there was a plank to cross a narrow stream of water flowing from the spring where we might get a drink of cool, clear spring water. Then on along the willows to the next fence to crawl under, later a stile was made at this point. Now we were in the woods which was a cow pasture, too. If it was a very cool morning, it was a precious delight to step on the warm earth where a cow had slept all night, and there warm your toes, for of course, in those days we were barefoot until there was no way to postpone putting on those sturdy shoes necessary for fall and winter. Many plants to check in the woods from spring time to fall: a lone gnarled apple in fall and a patch of dainty, fragile hepatica in spring and nest of birds in the trees. Then to the last fence and under it to the road to the two places on the north side of the lake, and the school. The teacher and other students would be there.<sup>1</sup>

### **Marcia Staton, who attended a Rusk County one-room school from 1937 to 1943, recalled:**

My sister and I walked two miles to school. Usually we could catch a ride with the milk hauler, but sometimes we had to walk. We had a huge snowstorm one night. The next day Mary and I walked the unplowed road. I had an easier time of it since the snow was heavily packed and I could usually walk on top of the crust. She was enough heavier that she kept breaking through. We struggled the mile to the corner and turned, only to see a snow drift that went from the roof of the cheese factory on one side of the road to the top of a tall pine tree on the other. The snow had drifted to twenty feet deep. We looked at each other and without a word, we turned and walked home. There wouldn't be any school for us that day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walworth County Historical Society. *Good Old Golden Rule Days*. Elkhorn, WI: Walworth County Historical Society, 1994, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Apps. *One-Room Country Schools: History and Recollections*. Woodruff, WI: The Guest Cottage, Inc., 1996, pp. 130-31.



## Pre-Visit Classroom Activity

### Lesson 5

### School Work

### Objective

To explore ways in which one-room country schools instilled values in students through hard work, discipline and responsibility.

### Directions

*Beautiful lips are those  
whose words  
Leap from the heart  
like songs of birds.  
Beautiful hands are  
those that do  
Work that is earnest,  
brave, and true.*

- 1904 text book

*Read and discuss the historical information with your students. In addition to the ones listed on the following page, ask your students to brainstorm and come up with a list of school chores that students in the 1930s would have performed. Then discuss how and why students performed these jobs.*

*To foster the notion of responsibility, your class will be asked to perform "school work" during its visit to the Reed School. Each task is detailed on the following pages, which you can cut apart and distribute. As you know your students best, you may choose to review the jobs and assign individuals to each duty. If you prefer, you could also distribute the assignments randomly. The goal is to give each student at least one special duty during the course of the day.*

*Have your students bring their chore description to the Reed School. You may want to collect the descriptions at the end of this lesson and redistribute them on the morning of your site visit.*

### Historical Information

More than simply a place of learning, the one-room schoolhouse served as a focal point for its community. These rural communities placed a high value on hard work, high moral standards and an outreach to others. These expectations carried over to children, both at home and at school.

Parents expected their children to contribute to the operation of the family farm, and as such, assigned them daily chores to complete both before and after school. The types of chores varied depending on the age and gender of the child and the type of farm that he or she lived on, but might include milking cows, gathering eggs or feeding the hogs or indoor chores such as bringing in firewood, cooking, or assisting with younger siblings.

While at school, teachers likewise needed and expected the students to contribute to the successful operation of the schoolhouse. At the Reed School, a woman came to clean, but only once a month. The teacher and students assumed responsibility for all the mundane tasks of running the building on a day-to-day basis. Students felt honored to be selected to perform most duties. The more challenging or most important tasks often rotated amongst the older students – the sixth, seventh and eighth graders – who arrived early or stayed late to assist the teacher.

Rural schools also fostered a strong sense of patriotism in students. In most one-room schoolhouses, the school day began with the raising of the American flag and the

singing of “America.” At the Reed School, the school day officially began at 9 a.m. and ended at 3:30 p.m., though the older students sometimes remained until 4.

Here is a partial list of “school work” that many students attending one-room schools completed:

- **Taking out the clinkers** – A student had to remove the clinkers from the furnace. Clinkers are the hard ash and partially fused coal that remains after coal is burned in a fire or furnace.
- **Putting coal in the furnace** – In winter, the teacher arrived early to an unheated schoolhouse and adding coal to the furnace was undoubtedly the first priority. This duty often fell to an older student.
- **Bringing in firewood** – A wood-burning stove in the classroom provided extra warmth and enabled the students to have “hot lunches.” Wood needed to be brought in and the fire started before the beginning of the school day.
- **Bringing in drinking water** – Most one-room schools did not have indoor plumbing. Water had to be brought in daily. Students pumped water from the well, or if the school did not have one, the students retrieved water from a nearby property. Sometimes a neighbor assumed this responsibility and brought the water to school, as was the case at the Reed School.
- **Ringing the bell** – A student could assist the teacher by ringing the bell as a warning to other students that school would soon be starting.
- **Raising and lowering the American flag** – Given its importance, the teacher assigned this responsibility to two older students. One child pulled the rope to raise or lower the flag and the other child made certain that the flag did not touch the ground.
- **Burning waste paper** – Garbage was burned rather than hauled away. A student carried out the waste and burned it in a burn barrel in the schoolyard.
- **Assisting the younger students with their school work** – In a multi-grade classroom, older students served as teacher’s aids and helped the younger students with their lessons.
- **Safety patrol** – Some one-room schools had a safety patrol, often called a schoolboy patrol, to assist students in crossing the road safely. Schools could receive a kit, complete with badges, white belts with a shoulder strap, and instructions. Not all country schools needed safety patrols, but even schools located on quiet dirt roads sometimes received the kits. Official duties or not, the students wore their belts and badges (see Appendix 1 – Image 12) with pride.



## “School Work” Assignments

Please cut on the dotted lines and distribute all the duties below, one to each student if possible. If you have less than 30 students in your class, you can hand out multiple assignments to students. Either write the students’ names yourself or have the students write their own names in the space provided. **Note: Depending upon the amount of time you will have to spend at Reed School and/or weather, some of the following activities may not be accomplished!**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Ringing the bell in the bell tower

You and a classmate will assist the Reed School interpreter in ringing the bell to alert your class that school is about to begin. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Ringing the bell in the bell tower

You and a classmate will assist the Reed School interpreter in ringing the bell to alert your class that school is about to begin. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Raising the American flag

You and a classmate will be responsible for raising the American flag at the start of the school day. Your job will be to pull the rope to raise the flag up the flagpole. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Raising the American flag

You and a classmate will be responsible for raising the American flag at the start of the school day. Your job will be to make sure that the flag never touches the ground. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school.



-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Lowering the American flag**

You and a classmate will be responsible for lowering the American flag at the end of the school day. Your job will be to pull the rope to lower the flag down the flagpole. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school. Instructions will be provided at this time. You will be called again at the end of the school day to perform this duty.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Lowering the American flag**

You and a classmate will be responsible for lowering the American flag at the end of the school day. Your job will be to make sure that the flag never touches the ground. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty while you are in the schoolyard shortly after your class arrives at the school. Instructions will be provided at this time. You will be called again at the end of the school day to perform this duty.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Drinking water**

You and a classmate will be responsible for provided drinking water for your class. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the end of morning lessons and additional instructions will be provided at this time.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Drinking water**

You and a classmate will be responsible for provided drinking water for your class. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the end of morning lessons and additional instructions will be provided at this time.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Erasing the blackboard (morning)**

You and a classmate will be responsible for erasing the blackboard at the end of morning lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the arithmetic lesson.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Erasing the blackboard (morning)**

You and a classmate will be responsible for erasing the blackboard at the end of morning lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the arithmetic lesson.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Lunch Cleanup**

You and a classmate will be responsible for cleaning up after lunch. If your class eats outside, please clean up any trash that is left behind and dispose of it in a garbage can. If your class eats lunch inside, please dispose of any garbage and wipe and dry the desks. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location of the cleaning supplies.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Lunch Cleanup**

You and a classmate will be responsible for cleaning up after lunch. If your class eats outside, please clean up any trash that is left behind and dispose of it in a garbage can. If your class eats lunch inside, please dispose of any garbage and wipe and dry the desks. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location of the cleaning supplies.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Sweeping floors**

You and a classmate will be responsible for sweeping the classroom after lunch. If your class eats outside, please complete this duty at the end of the school day instead. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location of the broom and dust pan.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Sweeping floors**

You and a classmate will be responsible for sweeping the classroom after lunch. If your class eats outside, please complete this duty at the end of the school day instead. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location of the broom and dust pan.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Retrieving playground equipment**

You and a classmate will be responsible for retrieving playground equipment for recess. After you have finished eating your lunch, please retrieve the equipment from inside the school. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location. At the conclusion of recess, please return the items where you found them.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Retrieving playground equipment**

You and a classmate will be responsible for retrieving playground equipment for recess. After you have finished eating your lunch, please retrieve the equipment from inside the school. The Reed School interpreter will show you the location. At the conclusion of recess, please return the items where you found them.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Morning classroom helper**

You and a classmate will be responsible for assisting the Reed School interpreter during morning lessons. This will involve handing out supplies to your classmates or other assignments as directed.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Morning classroom helper**

You and a classmate will be responsible for assisting the Reed School interpreter during morning lessons. This will involve handing out supplies to your classmates or other assignments as directed.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Afternoon classroom helper**

You and a classmate will be responsible for assisting the Reed School interpreter during afternoon lessons. This will involve handing out supplies to your classmates or other assignments as directed.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

**20. Afternoon classroom helper**

You and a classmate will be responsible for assisting the Reed School interpreter during afternoon lessons. This will involve handing out supplies to your classmates or other assignments as directed.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Erasing the blackboard (afternoon)**

You and a classmate will be responsible for erasing the blackboard at the end of afternoon lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the commencement ceremony.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Erasing the blackboard (afternoon)**

You and a classmate will be responsible for erasing the blackboard at the end of afternoon lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the commencement ceremony.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**23. Washing the blackboard**

You and a classmate will be responsible for washing the blackboard at the end of the afternoon lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the commencement ceremony. Additional instructions will be provided then.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Washing the blackboard**

You and a classmate will be responsible for washing the blackboard at the end of the afternoon lessons. Please listen for the Reed School interpreter to call for this duty at the conclusion of the commencement ceremony. Additional instructions will be provided then.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

**25. Handing out graduation certificates**

You and a classmate will be responsible for distributing graduation certificates at the end of the school day. The Reed School interpreter will call each student's name and you can hand out the certificates.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**26. Handing out graduation certificates**

You and a classmate will be responsible for distributing graduation certificates at the end of the school day. The Reed School interpreter will call each student's name and you can hand out the certificates.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**27. Safety Patrol Captain (gold badge)**

You and several of your classmates are the Reed School's safety patrol. You are responsible for the safe arrival of your class. Please wear your badge and belt (which will be provided to you upon your arrival at the Reed School), before school begins while your class gathers in the schoolyard. You may leave your badge and belt in the cloakroom upon entering the schoolhouse.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**28. Safety Patrol Lieutenant (red badge)**

You and several of your classmates are the Reed School's safety patrol. You are responsible for the safe arrival of your class. Please wear your badge and belt (which will be provided to you upon your arrival at the Reed School), before school begins while your class gathers in the schoolyard. You may leave your badge and belt in the cloakroom upon entering the schoolhouse.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

**29. Safety Patrol Officer (silver badge)**

You and several of your classmates are the Reed School's safety patrol. You are responsible for the safe arrival of your class. Please wear your badge and belt (which will be provided to you upon your arrival at the Reed School), before school begins while your class gathers in the schoolyard. You may leave your badge and belt in the cloakroom upon entering the schoolhouse.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

**30. Safety Patrol Officer (silver badge)**

You and several of your classmates are the Reed School's safety patrol. You are responsible for the safe arrival of your class. Please wear your badge and belt (which will be provided to you upon your arrival at the Reed School), before school begins while your class gathers in the schoolyard. You may leave your badge and belt in the cloakroom upon entering the schoolhouse.





## Follow-up Activity

### Lesson 1

### Hectograph Copies

#### Objective

To gain a better understanding of school life in the 1930s by experimenting with a technology for making copies - the hectograph "machine."

#### Directions

*Your students can create their own hectograph copier. You will need the following supplies:*

- Carbon paper (or hectograph pen, found at some art stores)
- Non-glossy paper
- One box of Knox gelatin (four envelopes)
- One cup of cold water
- One pint of glycerin (found at drugstores)
- Two tablespoons of sugar
- One large sauce pan
- Spoon
- One large pan (big enough for a sheet of paper) to form the "bed"
- Sponge or washcloth

*First, prepare your master copy on a sheet of paper with a hectograph pen or write on a piece of carbon paper on top of the paper.*

*In a large sauce pan, mix together the sugar and box of gelatin, then add the water and glycerin and heat until it boils. Boil for one minute. The mixture will emit a foul smell. Carefully pour the hot mixture into a pan and then draw a sheet of paper across the gelatin surface to remove any bubbles. Leave the bed on a flat surface for a few hours until the gel sets.*

*Moisten the surface of the bed by swirling cold water across it and wipe it dry with a fine sponge or washcloth, being careful not to leave any droplets of water. Carefully place the master copy on it face down smoothly and smooth it further with your fingers or the back of a spoon, and then*

*remove the paper. The gelatin surface now has the image from the master copy.*

*To make a copy, simply place a clean sheet of paper on the gelatin surface and leave it there for a few minutes to allow the ink to transfer into the top of the gelatin, and then remove it. You can repeat this process multiple times. When you have all the copies you want, wipe the surface clean with sponge and cold water, and start again. If your pad dries out, cover the top with warm water. When you are finished, wash your hands with soap and water to remove the purple stains.*

#### Historical Information

Before the invention of photo copiers, teachers needed some way to duplicate classroom materials. In the early twentieth century, the hectograph or gelatin duplicator was one process that lent itself well to use in one-room schools. This printing process involved transferring an original document, prepared with special inks, to a pan of gelatin. After transfer of the image to the inked gelatin surface, copies are made by pressing paper against it. When the bed ceased to be useful, ink could be sponged from the top of the gelatin and the pad reused for the next master.

The gelatin process produced print runs of somewhere between 20 and 80 copies, depending upon the skill of the user and the quality of the original. At least eight different colors of hectograph ink were once available, but purple was the most popular because of its density and contrast.



## Follow-up Activity

### Lesson 2

### Class Newspaper

---

#### Objective

To encourage students to think critically about present-day school life by creating a class newspaper as a record of their own school experiences.

#### Directions

*Divide the class into smaller groups of three to five students each. Assign each group a topic, such as school supplies, transportation, teachers, school description, daily schedule, subjects, teaching methods, lunch, recess, and home life. Each group can brainstorm about their subject and write their thoughts on a piece of paper. From this list, each group can write a brief article for submission to the class newspaper. Maps, poetry and artwork could also be incorporated.*

*Consider using the hectograph machine from Follow-up Activity – Lesson 1 to make a copy of the newspaper for each student to take home. Have the students write their article on carbon paper and then follow the directions outlined in the previous lesson.*

*Another suggestion is to type the articles and put them in newspaper format. Include photographs of you and your class, your school, your playground and/or your classroom. Don't forget to think of a title for your newspaper.*

*We encourage you to send a copy of your students' historical record to the Reed School.*

**REED SCHOOL** historic site  
c/o H.H. Bennett Studio historic site  
PO Box 147  
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965



## Evaluation

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As the Reed School strives to offer a high quality program for students, your input would be greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out this evaluation form.

1. Were the stated goals of the program met? If not, how could the Spring of 1939 program better achieve these objectives?
2. Did you find the Teacher's Guide to be a useful resource? Do you have any suggestions for improving it?
3. Were the pre-visit and follow-up activities helpful? Which ones did you utilize?
4. What on-site activities were the most successful?
5. What activities were the least successful and do you have any suggestions for improving them?
6. Are there any changes that you would like to see made to the program? If so, what are they?
7. How do you rate the quality of the Reed School interpreter in teaching your class?
8. Would you be interested in returning to the Reed School? Will you recommend it to other teachers?

Your comments will be used to evaluate and improve the Reed School's Spring of 1939 program. Thank you.

Please return this teacher's evaluation form to:

**REED SCHOOL** historic site  
c/o H.H. Bennett Studio historic site  
PO Box 147  
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965