

# Norwich Bridge School History

During the late 1700's, early settlers arrived, with some bringing their families to the Plantation #9's land area. Once dwellings and means of sustenance were established, they turned their attention to the education of their children.

In 1769, it was recorded at the Murrayfield Township April Town Meeting, "not to raise any more money for schools." However, a month later, something had caused a change of feeling, and four pounds was voted for schools, and in June, eight more pounds.

In 1780, four hundred pounds was raised to support schools. Schools were built in this year in the districts by the inhabitants. Dimensions were uniform: 20ft. by 18 ft. at one story tall. There were seven districts and their names: Middle, North End, Eggleston, Abbott, East, South, and West Branch.

Norwich Bridge School, circa 1900A committee of interested land-owning taxpayers, hired a teacher and acted as overseers of the district's buildings and curriculum.

Although not as yet historically verified, it appears that during this period of school construction, our museum, the Norwich Bridge School was built. Information from different sources suggests that the Norwich Bridge School was built circa 1800.

During a school committee meeting in 1872, there was a discussion about the preference of employing female teachers because "they are less apt to visit the village tavern."

Generally, classes were held for students in grades one through eight in the Norwich Bridge School until 1919. At first, school was usually broken into two terms: the spring and winter, that lasted about ten weeks per term. Eventually, there were three [fall, winter, spring] terms ranging from 10-12 weeks in length and then finally, four terms, including late spring and fall breaks for planting and harvesting. It was common for teachers to be boarded in townspeople's homes. Some taught for an entire year, and others taught for just one term and then moved on to another school, or community. It seems that the Norwich Bridge School, never held more than 16 students during any one term.

The first Murrayfield School was built in 1892 – and eventually the Norwich Bridge School closed its doors as a town schoolhouse in 1919, and its students attended the larger school closer to the new center of the town.

Over the years, the little schoolhouse was utilized in many non-school capacities, often for club meetings, bridal and baby showers, art classes and various organizations' general use and meetings, as well as for storage.

There were different efforts to save and preserve the building and create a living museum beginning in 1971. In 1976 a Bicentennial grant was used to more fully restore the schoolhouse to its original condition as a one-room district school with desks and blackboards. Once the efforts of many dedicated and skilled volunteers was completed, the schoolhouse-museum came to life once again. The museum both stores, and displays, interesting historical papers, documents, photos, books, period costumes and furniture, artifacts, as well as portraying its service to townspeople as a school. More restorative work was undertaken in 1981. In 1985, there was a reunion of still-living former students of the Norwich Bridge School held there.

Today, it serves as the Norwich Bridge School Museum and is overseen by the Huntington Historical Society.

Please come and visit our museum during one of our widely advertised open houses.