

Early Rural School Teachers Responsibilities - Part 2

The earliest teachers in the 1840s were probably educated in the East before they arrived here. For many years the teachers probably only had an 8th-grade education as there were no high schools in the county; Monroe's first graduating class was in 1871. The county superintendent would hold 1-day or 2-day teacher institutes where there would be classes on various topics. The county training school for teachers, which eventually became the Green County Normal School, opened in Brodhead on September 13, 1909. Teacher institutes were also held after that for the teachers' continuing education.

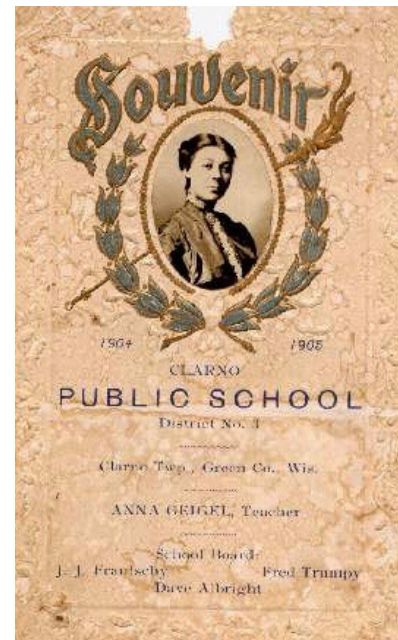
There were 27 teachers at a two-day institute in Postville in October 1873 with two sessions each day. Some of the topics covered were letter writing, orthoepy, orthography, singing, spelling, mental arithmetic, practical lessons on teaching, grammar, primary teaching, and a few more. "The convention was a very interesting one, and those who attended went away much edified and pleased." Another institute was held in Monroe the following month with primary arithmetic being one of the topics discussed. Mr. Twining thought it best to use corporal punishment in schools, "provided it was necessary, but at the judgment of the teacher."

The teachers also had to pass an exam to obtain their teaching certificate. A notice from county superintendent Willam C. Green in 1863 stated, "All those expecting to teach the coming summer are requested to be present at the regular examinations, otherwise it will be uncertain whether they can have an examination at all, as none will be examined afterward but such as make satisfactory proof that it was out of their power to attend the examination." The exams were only given in Adams township, Monroe, Juda, and Attica. At the end of this notice, it also stated, "It will be just as well for each applicant to provide himself with paper on which to write his answers, since our County Board decline to furnish it, deciding the teachers should find their own paper." By 1867 there were eight places listed where the teachers could take the exam. There were 77 teachers, mostly females, who took the exam in Monroe in 1870.

County Superintendent of Schools Richmond reported in April 1876 that of the 82 applicants for teacher certificates only 45 passed the required standard on their exams. Those who answered five to ten of the questions received a 6-month certificate while those who answered from seven to ten received a certificate for a year. Some of those who had already been teaching and had their schools engaged for another term did not get a certificate. "The examinations were conducted fairly, and no favoritism, as charged by some of the disappointed ones, was shown."

The February 12, 1906 issue of the Monroe Evening Times explained the levels of certificates the teachers could receive. For a Third Grade certificate an average of 70 was required with no standing below 60. For a Second Grade certificate the requirements of the Third Grade branches were raised another five points. For a First Grade certificate the requirements of the Second Grade branches were raised five points. No more than five standings of 80% or above could be transferred from an unexpired certificate. The 1902 Green County plat book has a list of licensed teachers for Green County, 109 with third grade certificates, 48 second grade, and 51 first grade, along with how many months experience each has. Lena V. Newman had the most with 250 months.

The Sentinel of February 26, 1879 stated, "As the time for closing the winter term for the country District Schools approaches, the school teachers are spending what they have



This is a cover of a souvenir booklet that teacher Anna Geigel gave to her students in the West Clarno School at the end of the 1904 - 05 winter term. Not only did it have her photo on the cover, but a list of school board members - J J Frautschy, Fred Trumpy, and Dave Albright. Inside the booklet was a list of the students enrolled that term.

accumulated during the winter, on fines and forfeitures, for elegant prizes, cards, and chromes, etc., to be distributed at the last day of school." A few of the souvenirs that teachers passed out have survived. They might include awards of merit or an entire booklet with a list of students in the school at the end of the term, maybe some verses about school, and sometimes a photo of the teacher on the front.

Rural schools and the teachers were isolated in the early years without phones, which made them susceptible to danger and scams. An article in the Times of October 23, 1908 warned the teachers to be "on their guard against a couple of smooth graters who are working the country with the proposition to give the teachers a membership in a reading club and furnish them with reading books and a course of study. The expense is \$12.60, and notes are taken, which are turned over to local bankers at a discount, and the books fail to put in an appearance." These men had swindled 200 teachers in one county in Iowa.

A headline in the August 25, 1916 Monroe Evening times stated, "School Teacher Poorly Paid and Lonely Life." It went on to say that the county teachers were being paid more than the average for the state, but that it was a "poorly paid and lonesome profession." A report by County Superintendent John N. Burns showed that the annual wage for male teachers (outside of Monroe and Brodhead) was \$674.28 compared to \$477.51 for the women. It went on to say, "Sheep herding on the western plains has little on school teaching for loneliness," citing that the rural schools averaged only about six visitors a year, which included school board members and parents of students.

In July 1918 Superintendent Burns received \$1,343.32 in state aid which he distributed to rural teachers who had taught longer than one year in the same school. The approved teachers received an additional \$2 per month for three years in the same school and \$4 per month for four or more years in the same school. Of the 49 teachers who received benefits, five had taught continuously for four or more years in the same school, 14 for three years, and 24 for two years. The maximum benefit was \$72.