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The School Bell by
Ashley McKennon

I can remember the school bell,
Rising early on an August day.
It chimed half past six,
Beneath the last of summer and its rays.

My love came unbound in its meritorious
tale,
Of lines filled of sailors and their sails,
And the trails of scouts
With whistle and bell in hand,
Looking for places new and unfound.

The schoolchildren lined one by one
For a game of dragonfly in good fun,
And I ran beneath the idle sun.
Tugging upon my pack,
At its end, from its cumbersome rack.

There are lessons pulled out along the
seats,
Set and placed in every direction,
The students set to pen and pencil to read,
And the sound of it begins,
The bell, that is, crisp, trimm'd, and clean.

And the last of its day,
When it all came down and complete,
My pack remained,
Bound and intact.
The numerous tasks and equations
Complete and exact.

Why is the school bell always early? By
Robert Broadbent

Why is the school bell always early?

The school bell is ringing
And I'm still in the lane
Teacher will tell me
That I'm late again

But that isn't right
It's certainly not fair
She rings that bell
Before I get there

Now mom she will tell me
I'm late for my tea
I will blame teacher

But mom will blame me

But detention I'll mutter
I'll whinge and I'll groan
Now I am grounded
In my bedroom at home

Do not be late
My mother will say
As I set off for school
On the very next day

I hop and I skip
Splash puddles in the lane
The school bell is ringing
It's early again

You may ask why have we put two poems about school bells at the beginning of this newsletter. As you will learn below it has something to do with a very special acquisition that the Society received recently.

New BHS Acquisition

By Eric Hooglund, BHS Collections

Your society has acquired an important new acquisition for its permanent collection, the 130-year old, metal school bell that used to call kids to class in the former District 11 schoolhouse in Belgrade Lakes (Photo 1). We are extremely grateful to BHS member Joan (Wadleigh) Megill for recognizing the historical significance of this bell, which she kept safe from the elements after acquiring it years ago. Now, she has donated the bell to the BHS so that current and future generations can have the opportunity to view this unique artifact. Thank you, Joan Megill!



Photo 1

Our society is confident that the bell arrived in Belgrade in 1887, because that date is engraved into the top rim of the 17-inch high bell. Next to the date is inscribed 'C. M. Pray.' We believe that is Charles Melvin Pray (1835-1904), who lived with his wife, Czirina (Simpson) Pray (1837-1922), on a farm at the corner of East and Point roads (Point Road was known as Lord



Photo 2

Road during the 19th century and well into the 20th century). We do not have any information as to why his name is engraved into the bell (Photo 2). Was C. M. Pray the benefactor who donated the bell? Did he forge the bell? Or was he a Superintendent for the Belgrade schools at the time or even chair of the Select Board? Hopefully, one of our members may be able to help us fill in the historical record on this detail.

The old District 11 schoolhouse was a one-room building located on Main Street at the southern end of the village, known as Belgrade Mills prior to 1900. Right across the street from the school, the West Road merged into Main Street. The BHS photo archive has a 1916 picture of that school, and one can see the bell in a small cupola that sets on the roof (Photo 3). In 1928, the town decided to build a new, two-room schoolhouse for District 11. The site chosen was behind the old schoolhouse on what became School Street. The old school house was sold to the American Legion, which did not tear down the building, but remodeled it by adding a second floor and a small



Photo 3

years. The new school was for grades K-5, and older kids went by bus to the Central School in Belgrade Depot. Our benefactor, Joan Megill, recalls seeing and hearing the bell when she attended the new District 11 School in the 1940s. BHS member Rodney Johnson, who attended the school later, in the 1950s, added some interesting—and fun—details about ringing the bell:

I remember ringing the bell daily as I went to school there from K thru 5th grade. ... Kids took turns ringing the bell in the morning, at recess and when the school was out in the afternoon. The rope for [the bell] hung in the hallway just inside the front door ... When kids were taking turns ringing the bell, some of the boys got over exuberant and “rode the rope” up and down. It always ended up with the teacher balling them out and threatening them never to do that again or else a paddling would ensue!! The teachers there during my tenure were Harold Stevens, Bee Stevens and Vera Fuller.



Photo 5

private home.

extension at the rear. That building still exists, but now is occupied by Dockside Physical Therapy and The Print Shop (Photo 4).

The bell went to the new schoolhouse, which opened in 1929 (Photo 5). It continued to operate for the next 40



Photo 4

After the school closed in 1969, the building eventually was renovated to become Belgrade's first Regional Health Center. The bell remained over the front door, but several years later, it was removed when the entrance was changed to be on the side of the building. The building now is a

As you can tell by reading the research that Eric has done, the history of the bell is vague. There are many questions that we would like to answer. If you have any information or documentation that might clarify the history of the bell please let us know by contacting me at: keschl@yahoo.com.

Notes:

- 1) You should have received your renewal notice for 2017 in the mail and thank you for your continued interest and support of the many activities in which our society is involved.
- 2) If you would like to participate in any of our committees please let me know. I am sure that there is a committee that could use your ideas, energy, and support.
- 3) We are in the final stage of developing our programs for the upcoming seasons and will let you know what the programs are and when/where they will be held. It is proving to be an exciting programs series.

Should you have any comments or questions, please e-mail me at keschl@yahoo.com.

