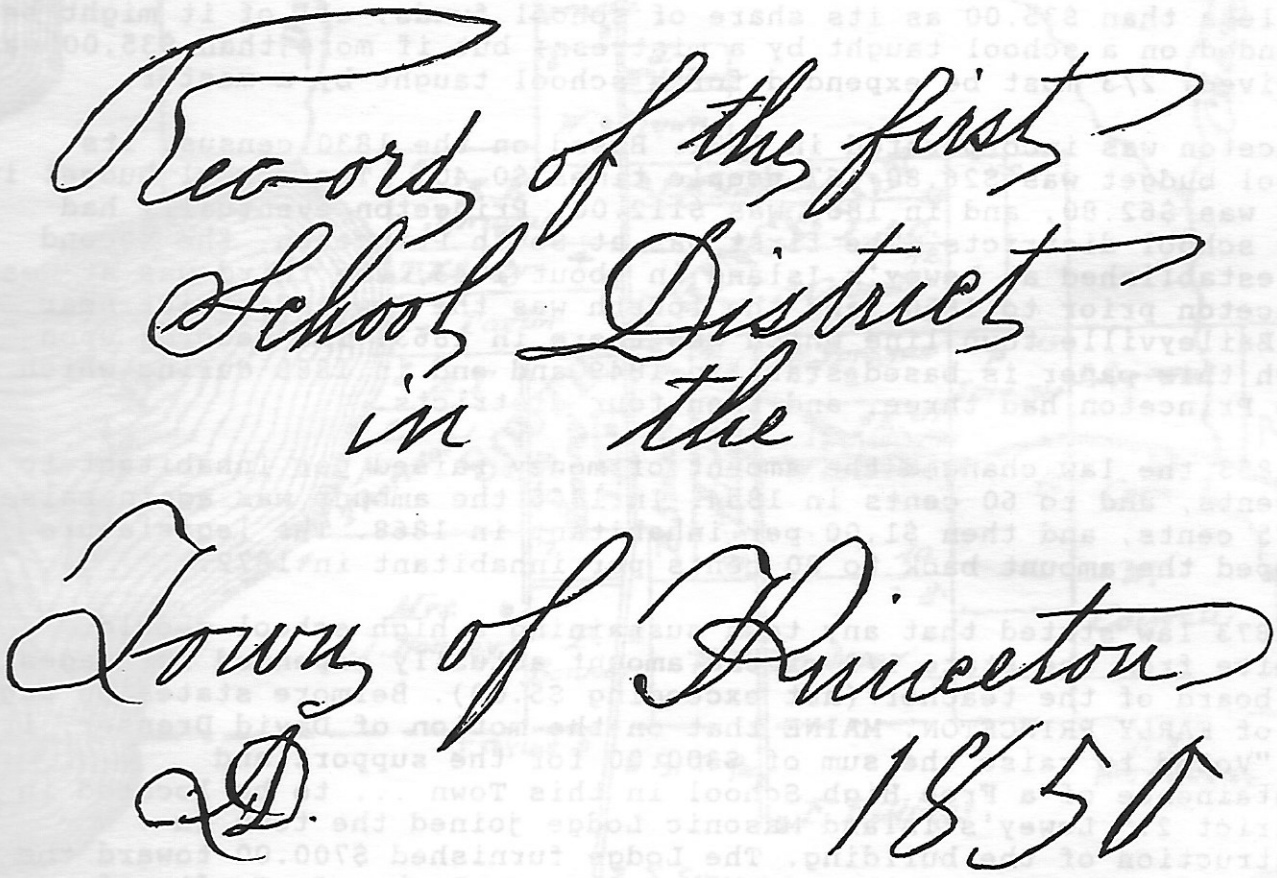
A-CHS Newsletter

Established 1980

SPECIAL ISSUE 4

MARCH 1998



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HISTORY OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Before Maine became a state, the incorporated towns followed Massachusetts law. Each town would elect a five member school committee and set up school districts within the town. The town then raised an amount of money required by law. In 1820, 40 cents per inhabitant was the minimum amount. The sum raised usually would be divided among the districts in proportion to the number of pupils in each district.

When Maine became a state, the law further stated that if a district had less than $35.00 as its share of school funds, all of it might be expended on a school taught by a mistress; but if more than $35.00 was received, 2/3 must be expended for a school taught by a master.

Princeton was incorporated in 1832. Based on the 1830 census, its school budget was $26.80 (67 people times $0.40). The school budget in 1840 was $62.80, and in 1850 was $112.00. Princeton eventually had four school districts. The first was at South Princeton, the second was established at Lewey's Island in about 1843, the third was at West Princeton prior to 1850, and the fourth was the lower district near the Baileyville town line which was there in 1863. The records upon which this paper is based start in 1849 and end in 1888 during which time Princeton had three, and then four districts.

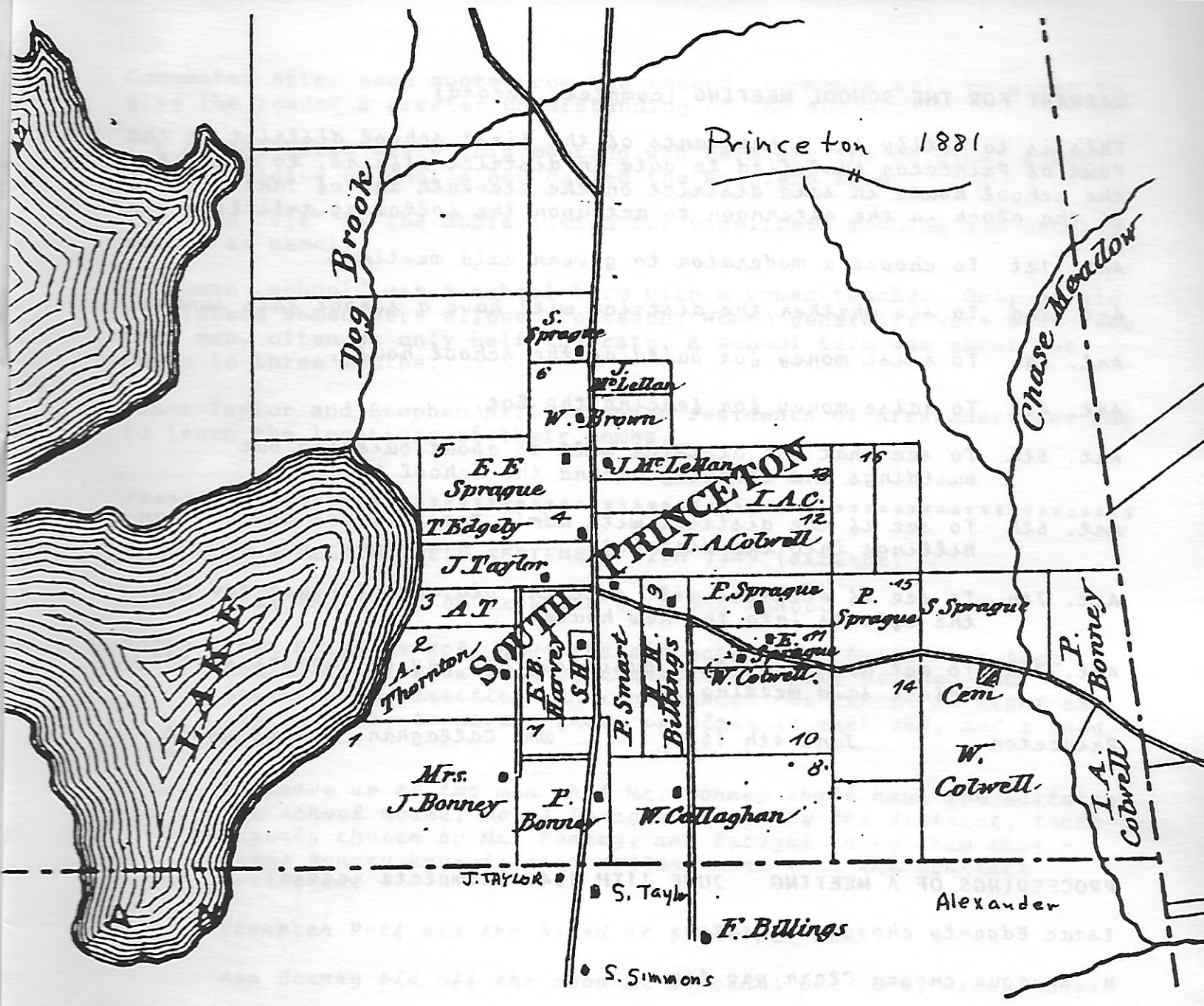
In 1853 the law changed the amount of money raised per inhabitant to 50 cents, and to 60 cents in 1854. In 1866 the amount was again raised to 75 cents, and then $1.00 per inhabitant in 1868. The legislature dropped the amount back to 80 cents per inhabitant in 1872.

An 1873 law stated that any town sustaining a high school should receive <u>from the state</u> 1/2 of the amount actually expended for wages and board of the teacher (not exceeding $5.00). Belmore states on page 125 of EARLY PRINCETON, MAINE that on the motion of David Dresser, it was "Voted to raise the sum of $300.00 for the support and maintainence of a Free High School in this Town ... to be located in District 2." Lewey's Island Masonic Lodge joined the town in construction of the building. The Lodge furnished $700.00 toward the construction and owned the upper two floors. Reuben J. Crafts of Princeton was the contractor.

The school district system was abolished by law in 1893. This did not abolish the districts but gave the power of education to the <u>town</u> school committee and superintendent of schools.

What were the roles of the elected district officials? This district chose a Moderator to govern each meeting. A District Clerk was elected for an annual term to keep records of the meetings. The School Agent was in charge of the day to day operation of the school. It appears that in a couple of cases he might have received compensation for his labors. We should note that only men were allowed to vote during the nineteenth century, however women could be elected to and hold public office.

What powers did the school districts have between 1820 and 1893? Like most of the incorporated towns of Maine, the school districts had the power to do anything they wanted that was not prohibited by state or federal law. Read on!



INTRODUCTION

The creation of this paper became possible in 1996 when Rachel Brown Hamilton made available to us the original RECORD OF THE FIRST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE TOWN OF PRINCETON. The book is a hand written account of the district business kept by the various clerks. It was transcribed into 54 pages of typed manuscript that may be read at our A/CHS archives.

Spelling in this paper has been standardized for easier reading. Two common spellings were found in the original. X was spelled SC such as Alescander for Alexander and escpend for expend. Words with double SS were spelled with the FS such as afsemble for assemble and Mofses for Mosses or Moses.

The record does not contain the names of any scholars and only a few teachers. We have tried to reconstruct both lists. Scholars will be listed after their parents names with a date of birth in parenthesis based on the census record.

WARRANT FOR THE SCHOOL MEETING (complete record)

This is to notify the inhabitants of the first school district in the Town of Princeton qualified to vote in district affairs, to meet at the school house in said district on the eleventh day of June at five of the clock in the afternoon to act upon the following articles, viz,

Art. 1st To choose a moderator to govern said meeting,

Art. 2nd To see whether the district will have a school this summer,

Art. 3d To raise money for building the school house,

Art. 4th To raise money for fencing the lot,

Art. 5th To see what the district will do about building out buildings and leveling around the school house,

Art. 6th To see if the district will admit James Taylor and Stephen Billings into the district,

Art. 7th To see if district will sell the old school house and put the effects into the new house,

Art. 7th To act upon any other business that may be brought legally before said meeting.

Princeton June 4th 1849 Wm. Callaghan, School Agent

PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING JUNE 11TH 1849 (complete record)

Isaac Edgerly chosen Moderator.

M. Sprague chosen Clerk pro tem.

Voted To have a woman school for this present summer.

Voted To raise the sum of one hundred and thirty dollars to pay for building school house and fencing the lot.

Voted That Stephen Billings and James Taylor be admitted into the district on considerations that the district have the privilege of taxing their property.

Voted That Peres Bonney be paying for extra expense on the school house, if any.

Voted That the meeting be adjourned without day.

Spencer M. Sprague, Clerk pro tem

Comments: After each quote from the record, comments will be given to give the reader a greater understanding of the subject.

The school house where this meeting was held was the original school, a log building on what's now called the Woodland Road.

The word "viz" is the abbreviation for videlicet, meaning and usually spoken as namely.

A "woman school" was a school term with a woman teacher. Only single or widowed women were allowed to teach. Women generally were paid less than men, often at only half the rate. A school term was about ten weeks to three months.

James Taylor and Stephen Billings were residents of Alexander. See map to learn the locations of their homes.

****

RECORD OF A MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 12TH 1849 (excerpt)

Voted That the money be expended on a man school.

Voted That Ebenezer Rolf have the old school for building a back house; to be five feet by eight, to be well boarded and shingled, a partition running through the center as tight as can be made, to have a frame of glass in each end, and a good vault.

Voted To leave up to two men what Mr. Bonney shall have for building the school house; Moses Sprague chosen by the district, Isaac Edgerly chosen by Mr. Bonney, and brought in by them that - Peres Bonney have fifteen dollars more than the contract specified.

Ebenezer Rolf bid the board at $1.50 per week.

Asa Bonney bid off the wood at 89 cents per cord, stove length.

Voted That the meeting adjourn without day.

Comments: The school house that Peres Bonney built was south of the four corners on the west side of the road. The third school house at South Princeton was built close to the corner and presently is the home of Velma McLellan. Apparently Bonney felt he didn't get enough for supplying the materials and building the school house, and his neighbors agreed with him!

The practice of bidding to supply room and board for the teachers was common. The lowest bidder got the master or mistress for the term. Some teachers had reputations for being helpful around the farm or home and the bids reflected that. At the May 20, 1850 meeting, the lowest bid for the mistress was $1.60 per week, bid by Peres Bonney. At the September 2, 1850 meeting, the lowest bid for the master was $1.44 per week, bid by Isaac Edgerly. The towns also "bid off" the poor or paupers in the same fashion.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 15, 1851 (excerpt)

Harris Rolf chosen Moderator

Voted *That the Agent be authorized to hire Henry P. Whitney at 26 dollars per month, board included.*

Voted *That the district approve of having the school house insured by the United States Insurance Company.*

Comments: Henry Payson Whitney is the first teacher named in the record. A list of known masters and mistresses appears on page 15.

This is the first reference to insurance. The district kept up this policy throughout the time recorded.

****

PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING: APRIL 17. 1854 (excerpt)

Voted *That the repairs to the school house be taken out of school money.*

On a motion of William Callaghan, voted that the repairing of the house be sold to the lowest bidder. Bid of Moses Sprague at 32 dollars for the whole job, painting and plastering.

On a motion of Eli Sprague, voted that the outside of the house be painted before the commencement of the summer school and the inside remain until after the close.

On the motion of Moses Sprague, voted that the agent make return of all expenses during his term of service annually and that same be recorded on the district record.

Comments: Taking the money from school money meant from the money coming from the town, not from their district tax.

****

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING SEPTEMBER 9, 1854 (excerpt)

Voted *That the district purchase a piece of land and prepare the same for a burying place.*

Voted *That the district hire money for to buy and prepare the same for burying.*

Voted *That the last part of Article 2 concerning moving bodies be dispensed with at the present.*

Voted *That there be a committee of three chosen to purchase the land and prepare the same. Moses Sprague, Geo. M. B. Sprague, and Isaac Edgerly were chosen that committee.*

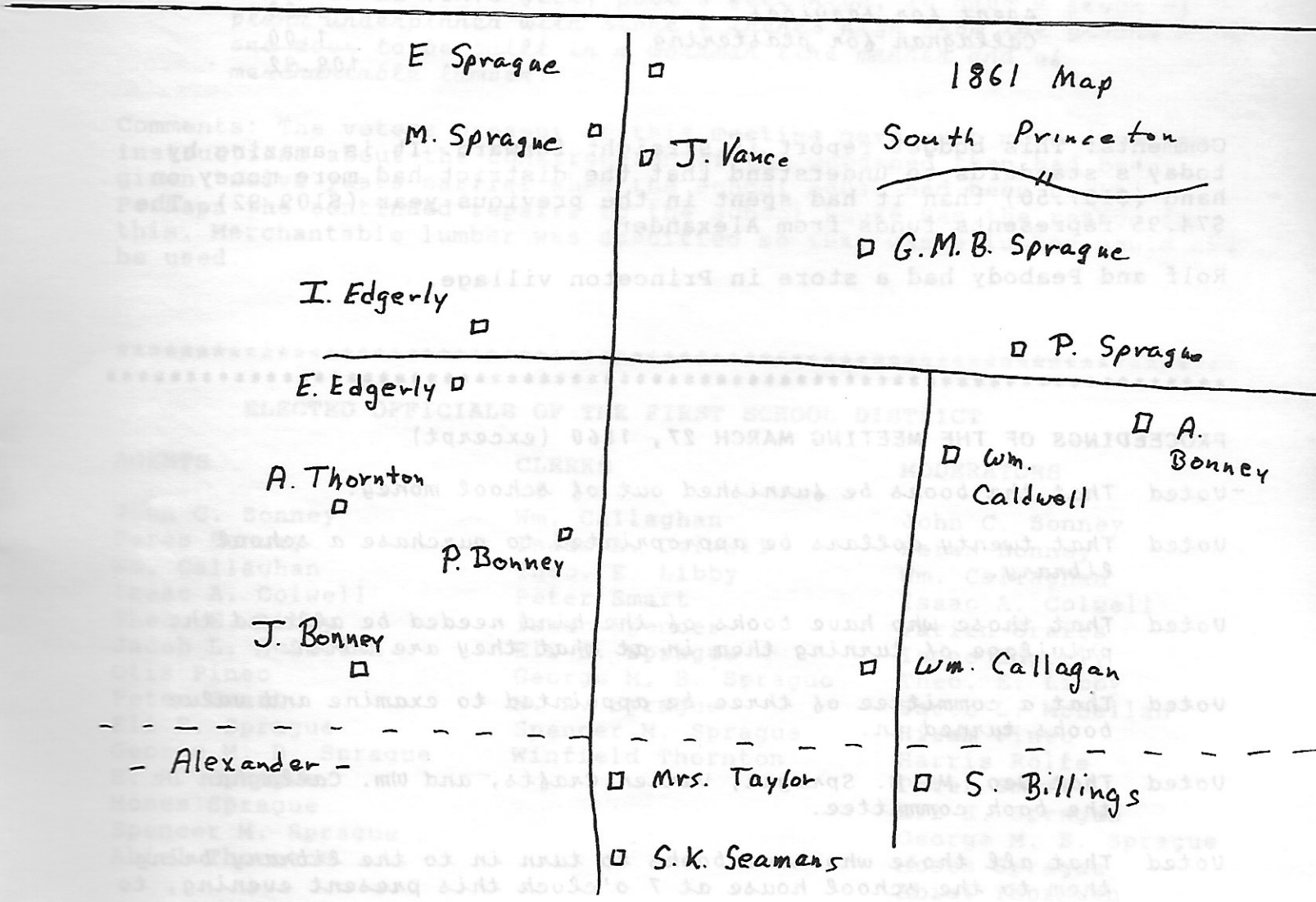
Voted That the purchase be an acre and a half.

Voted That the school commence on the 18th of September.

Stephen Billings	agrees	to	furnish	a cord of wood
Geo. M. B. Sprague	"	"	"	1/2 cord of wood
Edmund H. Edgerly	"	"	"	3/4 cord of wood
Cyrus Larabee	"	"	"	1/2 cord of wood
Samuel Seamans	"	"	"	1/2 cord of wood
Joel Spencer	"	"	"	1/2 cord of wood

Comments: The hiring of money to purchase and prepare land for a burying place seems quite unrelated to running a school district. This cemetery is located on what we now call the Woodland Road. There are only four stones with dates earlier than 1855, but many in the years following. The early dates may represent situations where the corpse was actually moved, or more likely, where the family wanted a complete record.

This is the only time recorded where the wood was acquired in this fashion. Was the amount of wood apportioned to the number of scholars from each family?



ACCOUNT OF MONEY APPROPRIATED TO DISTRICT NO. 1 (complete record)
PRINCETON AND ALEXANDER FOR THE YEAR 1858

Our proportion for 1858 was	$35.93
Undrawn before	$39.02
Town order taken for	$74.95
Our proportion in Princeton was	$158.44
Undrawn in 1857	$34.03
Total amount	$267.42
	$109.92
	$157.50

AMOUNT EXPENDED IS AS FOLLOWS

Paid	Jonathan Taylor for wood in 1856	$5.00
	G. M. B. Sprague for services after 57	4.27
	Sophia Jones for teaching	24.00
	Moses Sprague for boarding	22.50
	Cyrus Larrabee for wood	6.00
	William Colwell for boarding	20.00
	Rolf & Peabody for sundries	1.15
	George Farrer for teaching	20.00
	Agent for services	6.00
	Callaghan for plastering	1.00
		109.92

Comments: This budget report is straight forward. It is amazing by today's standards to understand that the district had more money on hand ($157.50) than it had spent in the previous year ($109.92). The $74.95 represents funds from Alexander.

Rolf and Peabody had a store in Princeton village.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING MARCH 27, 1860 (excerpt)

Voted That the books be furnished out of school money.

Voted That twenty dollars be appropriated to purchase a school library.

Voted That those who have books of the kind needed be allowed the privilege of turning them in at what they are worth.

Voted That a committee of three be appointed to examine and value books turned in.

Voted That Geo. M. B. Sprague, Varien Crafts, and Wm. Callaghan be the book committee.

Voted That all those who have books to turn in to the library bring them to the school house at 7 o'clock this present evening, to be examined by the committee.

Comments: The term "library" does not correspond with our understanding of the word. Later in this paper we shall see what books were part of this library. The $20.00 was to come from town money, not district funds. Books turned in would get the donor credit on their district tax.

****

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING ON MARCH 30, 1861 (excerpt)

Voted That the district build a wood shed.

Voted That the building of the woodshed be sold by the Moderator to the lowest bidder and that a committee of three be appointed to accept it when done and choose a place to set it.

Voted That the committee be appointed by the Moderator; Moses Sprague, Varien Crafts, Peres Bonney.

Voted That the building be completed within three months, size of the house to be 12X16 feet, post 8 feet high, to have a floor of plank underpinned with stone 8 inches high from the ground with one door to be built in a workman like manner and of merchantable lumber.

Comments: The voters present at this meeting gave much more detailed instructions about the construction of the woodshed than had been given twelve years earlier when the school house had been built. Perhaps the continued repairs to the school house was the reason for this. Merchantable lumber was specified so that waste lumber would not be used.

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ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE FIRST SCHOOL DISTRICT

AGENTS

John C. Bonney
Peres Bonney
Wm. Callaghan
Isaac A. Colwell
Theo. E. Libby
Jacob L. McLellan
Otis Pineo
Peter Smart
Eli E. Sprague
George M. B. Sprague
H. A. Sprague
Moses Sprague
Spencer M. Sprague
Abiel Thornton

CLERKS

Wm. Callaghan
Isaac A. Colwell
Theo. E. Libby
Peter Smart
Isaac Spencer
Eli E. Sprague
George M. B. Sprague
H. A. Sprague
Spencer M. Sprague
Winfield Thornton

MODERATORS

John C. Bonney
Peres Bonney
Wm. Callaghan
Isaac A. Colwell
Varien Crafts
Isaac Edgerly
Theo. E. Libby
Jacob L. McLellan
Hiram Pineo
Harris Rolfe
Peter Smart
Eli E. Sprague
George M. B. Sprague
Moses Sprague
Abiel Thornton
Winfield Thornton

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY, DECEMBER 25, 1861 (complete record)

Greenleifs National Arithmetics	6	copies
" Common School "	8	"
" Primary "	9	"
Welds New Grammar	10	"
" Old "	1	"
Progressive Fifth Readers	9	"
" Fourth "	7	"
" Third "	9	"
" Second "	8	"
" First "	10	"
" Primers	9	"
" Spellers	23	"
Cotton & Fitch Modern Geography	10	"
" " " Introductory Geography	7	"
Total Number of Volumes	126	

Comments: We find by this list of books that the community considered text books to be library books, and supplied these to the scholars. At a later meeting it was voted to make parents responsible for books being used at home.

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PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING HELD MARCH 30, 1864 (excerpt)

Voted That the agent procure a globe.

PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 16, 1865 (excerpt)

Voted Mr. Callaghan be paid $1.00 for getting deed for lot recorded.

Comments: Likely a terrestrial globe, one that shows the land and water areas of the earth. The first terrestrial globe was said to have been constructed in 1492. The oldest globe with both hemispheres is at the New York Public Library and is dated 1506-1507. A celestial globe is intended to show the heavens.

Comments: Was this for the school lot sixteen years after the house had been built, or was this for the burying ground?

PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING APRIL 6, 1966 (excerpt)

Voted That the house be thoroughly repaired if at all.

Voted To repair the outside of the house.

Voted To pay for the repairs by district tax.

Voted That the repairing be let to the lowest bidder.

Voted That the walls be clapboarded and painted.

Voted That the repairing bid of by Mr. Colwell for $38.00.

Comments: Almost every warrant or meeting minutes had some statement about building repairs. The door wouldn't close, the roof leaked, holes in the plaster needed patching, and fixing the foundation were some repairs mentioned.

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NOTICE OF AGENT 1870 (excerpt)

Paid out as follows:

Stove $19.80	Chair $2.00	Chalk $.38	Books $22.00
Lock and key $.35	Pail and Broom $.79	Insurance $2.75	

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING AUGUST 2, 1877 (excerpt)

Voted To pay twenty dollars out of school money towards furniture.

Comments: These are the first mentions of furniture. Probably the old furniture had been moved from the old school house to the new. The single chair must have been for the teacher. Among the items purchased were two 7 foot settees, two 9 foot settees, and 3 1/2 dozen coat & hat hooks. Later we find funds spent to repair chairs.

****

SOUTH PRINCETON SETTLERS LOTS OWNERS - 1834

Eli T. Sprague	John Vance	Moses Sprague
Peter Carle	G. Edgerly	E. Rolf
F. Edgerly	Wm. Coldwell	P. Bonney
Jacob Norton	Hunter and Robinson	

PROCEEDINGS MARCH 30TH 1878 (excerpt)

Voted That the Agent get a hand trunk for the district papers.

Voted That the Agent be instructed to build a privy, and repair the woodshed.

Voted That the privy be built 8 by 12, seven foot posted, cleat doors, third grade of shingles, merchantable hemlock boards, a three light sash over each door, a double partition between each apartment, pine seats, well underpined with stone.

Peter Smart bid in the building for twenty seven dollars. Jacob McLellan repairs the woodshed for four dollars and fifty cents.

Comments: Perhaps it was in this hand trunk that the old record book survived all these years. A new privy! What happened to the one built in 1861?

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A LIST OF SOME EXPENSES OF DISTRICT ONE DURING THE 1880'S (excerpt)

To carry teacher to Milltown	$1.50
To Waite to hire a teacher	1.75
Paint for blackboards	.35
Painting blackboards	.50
Broom	.25
Three panes glass	.19
Two boxes Crayons	.30
Map	1.75
J. Bohanon for collecting money in Alexander	.35
Leroy Fickett for 4 cords wood	3.56
Willis Taylor for removing banking	.50
Jennie McDonald for teaching 3 weeks	10.50
Fannie Billings for 4 1/2 weeks board	8.91
Sarah Dudley for 1 1/2 teaching	5.25
A. B. Sprague for Agent services	6.05
E. A. Merrill for teaching 4 months	120.00
E. E. Sprague for labor on school house	50.00
William Brown for services as clerk	1.00
Herbert Edgerly for grading around school house	5.00
Insurance	3.75
Rods for the stove	.25

Comments: These figures are from three different reports and are meant to give the reader an overview of what items were in the school budget of that time, and to get a feel for what a dollar would buy.

SCHOLARS AT THE SOUTH PRINCETON SCHOOL FROM 1850 - 1880

These names were gathered from the Princeton census records from 1850, 1860, and 1880. Alexander census records were used for those families. Children's names follow parents' names.

Asa and Jane Bonney
William H. [1838]
Clara [1840]
Peres [1842]
Albert [1844]
Harriet [1846
Louisa [1849]

James and Jane Bonney
John [1834]
Amelia [1837]
Nathaniel [1840]
Maryann [1842]
William [1844]
Moses [1846]
Nancy [1850]

John C. and Annetta Bonney
Clarrissa [1868]
Mabel [1872]
Guy [1878]

Peres and Catherine Bonney
Sarah J. [1867]

Weston and Adelia Brown
Almond Libby [1865]

Isaac A. and Clara Calwell
Rhoda [1873]
Charles E. [1875]
Albert J. [1877]
Cassie [1879]

Otis and Anna Pineo
Laura [1852]
William [1856]
Alice [1855]
Lucinda D. [1865]

Freeman Billings
with his widowed mother and
single sister, Mary
Arthur Edgerly (adopted) [1864]

William and Dorcas Calwell
Rhoda [1835]
Rebecca [1839]
Sally [1841]
Isaac [1843]
Hiram [1845]
Fanny [1848]
Laura [1850]
Charles [1854]
William [1856]

Phineas and Eva Callaghan
Carry M. [1874]

William and Sarah Callaghan
William H. [1838]
James Thomas [1840]
Hamlin P. [1842]
Clarissa T.]1844]
Annette [1846]
Phineas H. [1848]
Timothy [1849]
George [1851]
Martha [1855]
Sarah [1856]
Lovina Miller [1836]

Varien and Jane Crafts
Melissa [1844]
Frederic [1846]
Sarah [1848]
Frank [1850]
William Bates [1850] pauper

Edmund and Elizabeth Edgerly
Maria [1854]
Everline [1856]
Sarah [1858]
Margaret G [1845]
George Carwell [1853]
Howard Carwell [1854]

Jonathan and Almira Taylor
Ruth E. [1867]
Willis H. [1872]

Isaac and Lucy Edgerly
Amelia G. [1837]
Hannah F. [1839]
Lucy A. [1841]
Emma A. [1843]
Isaac L. [1846]
Charles [1851]
Ida [1854]
Samuel [1856]
Herbert [1859]

Cyrus and Sarah Larabee
Martha [1840]
Josiah [1845]
Richard [1848]

Jacob and Nancy McLellan
Grace A. [1871]
Charles F. [1873]
James E. [1874]
Howard A. [1877]
Gertrude [1879]

Eli and Elizabeth Sprague
Frank [1857]
Wentworth [1859]
Lewis A. G. [1862]
Bessie E. [1863]
Ethelle A. [1866]
Marcia E. [1875]

George M. B. and Rhoda Sprague
William [1849]
Adelaid [1852]

Moses and Martha Sprague
Emiline M. [1838]
Rachel [1843]

Peries and Minerva Sprague
Adda A. [1856]
Everett [1857]
William V. [1858]
Velona [1861]
Aurietta [1863]
Sirena [1868]
Edward [1872]
Sampson [1874]

Peter and Almira Smart
Ellen G. [1863]
Ada [1865]
Thomas Robertson [1863]

Abiel and Mary Thornton
Seth [1863]
Leah Kinsum [1871]
Mary Thornton [1879]
Charles Thornton [1880]

John and Eliza Vance
Mary [1859]

Stephen and Rhoda Billings
Hiram [1838]
Joel [1840]
Lucinda [1842]
Emelia [1844]
Freeman [1846]
Mary [1851]
Asa Bonney [1831]
Almira Bonney [1832]
Ann Bonney [1835]

Samuel and Abigail Seamans
also spelled Simmons
Elisa [1848]
Raymond [1851]
Vilona [1853]
Fidella [1855]
Ella C. [1857]
George A. [1859]
John [1861]
Leora Estelle [1866]
Willie [1869]
Laura J. [1872]

James and Rachel Taylor
Ann [1835]
Jonathan [1837]
Caroline [1838]
Martha [1842]
Stillman [1844]
Alden [1847]
Abigail [1849]
Laura [1852]
James [1855]

Stillman and Lucy Taylor
Minnie [1866]

MASTERS AND MISTRESSES OF THE SOUTH PRINCETON SCHOOL

Teachers are listed below in order of first appearance in the record, with dates of [birth] from the census and notes on some from available sources. Additions and corrections will be printed in a regular issue of our newsletter.

Henry P. Whitney [1821] of Alexander was married to Margaret Bohanon. Henry was first hired in 1851 and paid $26 per month, board included. Henry taught at several schools in Alexander plus here before the family moved to Minnesota before the 1870 census.

Julia Smith was paid $15.00 for teaching in 1857.

P. F. Smith received $13.00 in 1858.

Sophia Jones of Calais was the daughter of Isaac and Salone Jones. She taught here in 1858 before her marriage to Elbridge Gerry of Robbinston.

George Farrar [1832] of Baileyville was married to Emily and the father of at least two children, Willie and Harriet. He was at this school in 1858 and was paid $20 for his services.

M. N. McKusick [1841] of Baring. Marshall was a son of Levi and Frances McKusick. He first taught here in 1861 and was paid $20. He did come back for several more terms.

O. P. Treat of Calais was paid $17.00 for teaching here in 1861. Oliver married Elizabeth Jones in 1855.

Miss Jones in 1864 was paid $24.00 for teaching.

Laura A. Colwell [1851] of South Princeton was a daughter of William and Dorcas Colwell. She was paid $5.00 per week in 1870.

Martha Libby [1850] daughter of James and Sarah Libby of Princeton was paid $60.00 in 1870.

James Spencer [1830] of Princeton, according to 1880 census had a wife Harriet [1839] and a daughter Anna [1856]. He taught often at South Princeton, first in 1870, when he was paid $75 for the term.

Fannie Colwell [1848] was a sister of Laura Colwell, in 1871 received only $4.00 per week. The district paid $1.85 per week for board for her. Was that taken from her pay?

Levi McKusick [1854] of Baring a brother of Marshall McKusick. For his first term here he was paid $28 per month. His board rate was $2.98 per week in 1871. Levi spent several terms at South Princeton.

Nelly Harvey was paid $52 for teaching a term here in 1872. The district also paid $4.75 for stage fare for her.

F. M. Widden taught here in 1873.

Jane Taylor was paid $50.00 for a term in 1874.

Carrie Polleys Was she Caroline [1853] Polleys of Baring, daughter of John and Elizabeth Polleys? Carrie was here in 1876.

Mrs. Crafts taught here in 1877 and 1878.

Mr. Boxwell was here in 1878.

Frank Thornton [1856] of Baileyville was the son of Abial and Mary Thornton. He taught part of a term in 1878.

John F. Stone taught a part of a term in 1878.

Nellie McKusick [1858] was a sister of Marshall McKusick. Nellie taught a term in 1879 and was paid $54.00.

H. J. Chipman was paid $90.00 for teaching in 1879.

Martha Lidsy or Liolsy also taught in 1879.

James Gray [1857] of Wesley was the son of John and Hannah Gray. He was studying law according to the 1880 census. He was the master here part of a term in 1879.

Willis Dresser [1861] of Princeton was the son of David and Amelia Dresser. David was also a teacher. Willis was the other master in 1879.

Jennie McDonald received $3.50 a week for part of a term in 1884.

Sarah Dudley [1867] of Waite was the daughter of John and Ellen (Lane) Dudley. She finished the other part of the "woman school" term in 1884.

E. A. Merrill was paid $30 per month in 1884.

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ALEXANDER-CRAWFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
216 POKEY ROAD
ALEXANDER ME 04694-6012

FIRST CLASS MAIL