

SCHOOL HOUSE INTERPRETATION AND SCHOOLING HISTORY

Early settlers to Huntington County were concerned about the education of their children. Families who could afford to hire their own tutors and sometimes invited their neighbors to attend these "private schools." The community, not the state, was responsible for children's education. So until the community could build a school, it was held wherever possible. As early as the winter of 1834-1835, the first school was held in a tavern kept by Jonathan Kellers. By the next year a log school house was built in the area where the Public Service Building now stands. As more partners became interested in the education of their children, a private "subscription school" was opened. Families contributed what they could, mostly in the barter system, often trading room and board for the opportunity for their children to "get some learnin'."

Our site represents schools in Indiana for white settler children. Miami children would not have been allowed to attend these schools.

Children would have gone to school starting in October or November, whenever the crops were in and gone units April or May whenever it was time to plant again. The school term often did not last more than 60 days. They would have gone six days per week from 7:00 am - 5:00 pm. Most students who attended for only five years. They were then taught to know enough to get along in the world and were big enough to work.

The students and their families were responsible for everything in the school, including the teacher, slates, paper, books, wood, etc. The students "subscribed," which meant that they paid 1 to 3 cents per month to go to school. Students sat on wooden benches and did their writing at a board attached to one wall. Candles furnished the only light on dark days and a wood box stove usually sat in the middle of the room. Since paper was expensive, they could not afford for every child to do all their lessons on papers. For that reason, many schools were called "loud" schools or "blab" schools. Lessons would have been done out loud; younger students learned by listening to the older children recite lessons. Only about once a week did students get to practice writing.

At the end of the school term a special celebration was held. Parents would come and the entire community would enjoy a basket dinner. Students would be dressed in their best clothes and would "speak their piece," a specially learned recitation which had been carefully memorized for the occasion. Awards of merit were presented by the teacher to recognize the students of their achievements during the school year. Games were played and contests held.

The log school at the Forks of the Wabash Historic Park was reconstructed from a two-story log house formerly located on the Dennis Farm, north of Huntington. We moved on site in the mid-1990s and used it as a one-room school house.