

Guided Notes (Teacher)

Imagine going to school just three months and having the rest of the year off. That's the way things happened that first school year at Bon Homme.

But it didn't mean students had a nine-month vacation. In **1860**, once spring came, just about everyone had long hours of farm chores. There wasn't enough time for school again until after **harvest**, late in the fall.

"The advancement of prosperity, wealth and power of a country is intimately associated with, and dependent upon, the development of the educational interest."

Government set up a system of schools. Dakota children would attend beginning at age **five**. These schools were controlled by citizens elected to school boards in towns, and in the countryside between towns.

Dakota Territory was building on an American belief already 200 years old in the 1860s: that all children deserved an education. If the United States was to be a land where everyone had an opportunity to become whatever they dreamed, regardless of family background, wealth or poverty, then good schools would put those dreams within reach.

They decided to **tax** farmers and others based on how much land they owned, and use that money for schools.

William Beadle, an early education superintendent, thought it was also important for the territory, and later the state, to own school lands. These lands would be rented to farmers, and the rent money would go to schools.

In some early South Dakota classrooms, lessons were taught in languages other than English, including **Norwegian, German, and Dutch**.

Churches built schools on South Dakota reservations, too, after the United States government asked them to. The Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches built reservation schools, as did the Catholic Church under Father Martin Marty. Often these were boarding schools, where even very young children lived in **dormitories**, away from their families.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, thousands of schools were built across South Dakota. By far, most were one-room country schools, where one teacher worked with an average of ten students, first grade through **eighth**.

One-room school teachers, usually women, needed lots of skills. They had to keep their buildings heated, first with coal, and later with oil-burning stoves.

These teachers had to handle emergencies—from threatening weather to **snake bites**—all by themselves.

Towns built schools for students grades one through eight, too, and that's also where the state's public high schools were located.

Other trends changed South Dakota education during the last half of the twentieth century. As kids started the new school year in the fall of 1957, they couldn't have guessed that a rocket...halfway around the world, was about to change their classrooms. The rocket launched a Soviet Union **satellite** named Sputnik into space, and Americans were stunned—worried they were falling behind the Soviets in science and technology.

Beginning in the 1970s, South Dakota schools responded to a national law saying students with even the most severe **disabilities** had a right to meaningful educations.

Another trend in the late 1900s saw more South Dakotans than ever before wanting to continue their educations beyond high school. Colleges and universities grew. In addition to the University of South Dakota at Vermillion, for more than a hundred years South Dakota has supported state colleges or universities at **Aberdeen, Brookings, Madison, Spearfish, and Rapid City**.

Often South Dakota education has reflected what political leaders believe. For example, Governor **George Mickelson** believed local control to be important and looked for more ways to involve communities in shaping their schools.

Governor **Bill Janklow** promised South Dakota would lead the nation in learning technology, and worked to wire the schools for computer connections. Our schools today, in many ways, are different from the first one in Bon Homme. But in some ways they're exactly the same: places where kids want to learn and teachers want to help.