

Dickerson Hill School House – One of the Town’s “Rural” Schools

For fifty years after settlers arrived in New Chester, schooling was conducted in private homes. Later, as the community grew, a teacher was hired and paid for by the town, but those six-week school sessions were still conducted at someone’s house. School sessions were somewhat irregular. *(Teachers note: What might the children have been doing when they were not in school?)*



In 1821, a section of Alexandria was incorporated into New Chester, and a School District designated as New Chester District #3 was created, running to Cass Mill Road.

By 1832 there were 30 “scholars” in the district, and the Town decided that the area needed its own school building. A special school tax was levied totaling \$216.51. The new schoolhouse was located on the land of Sewall Dickerson opposite the “Murray Burying Yard” along the highway built in the 1819s (now Murray Hill Road). The building was 24’ by 24’ square, with two entrance doors. *(Teachers note: Why might this be so?)*

In 1889, the owner of the land on which the school house stood arranged to have the school building moved to a parcel of land owned by Dana B. Dickerson. The building was renovated, and desks for 40 students were installed. It was here that Jennie Dickerson first went to school, and was here that she herself began her teaching career as a 17-year-old in 1896. *(Teachers note: Our town seems to have a history of moving buildings! How do you imagine a small building would be moved in the late 1890’s?)*

The Dickerson Hill School was in continuous use for 77 years by the time it closed in 1910. It was then deemed too expensive to keep going, especially after a new “modern” school was built in the old village. Hill Center School was then the only remaining rural school in the town.

