ULEYBURY SCHOOL MUSEUM

EDUCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In 1851 an Act to promote Education in South Australia, by aids towards the creation of Schools and the payment of Stipends to Teachers (Education Act) was passed 'to support and improve ... parents' and neighbours' efforts to establish schools.' For the next 20 years a statutory Board of Education subsidised the building of schools and supplemented teachers' incomes (teachers were generally paid out of the fees paid by the parents). These schools were intended for the lower and middle classes. The wealthy provided for the education of their own children with private tutors and governesses, and with privately funded schools.

The 1851 Act did not make attendance compulsory and, in Adelaide's poorer sections and in rural areas, children attended school when and as their parents' could afford it, and when they were not required to assist about the house or farm.

The 1875 Education Act made it compulsory for children between the ages of seven and 13 to attend school. Full time attendance was still not compulsory; a minimum of about two-thirds of the school year was allowed, which was largely dictated by the need for the children's labour on family farms. The Act of 1875 made it compulsory for a child to attend school 35 days a quarter until they passed a fourth class examination when, no matter how young, he was at liberty to leave, sometimes at the early age of nine.

Full time compulsory attendance was finally legislated in 1915. Meanwhile working class parents had petitioned successfully for free elementary education, which was granted in 1891. The school leaving age was raised to 15 years in 1963.

TRAVELLING TO SCHOOL

Most children walked to school, usually along dirt roads which could by dusty in the summer heat and muddy in the winter. If the path to school was quicker through the neighbours paddocks, then this became the preferred route. Some children travelled by horse and card, others would ride a pony that would have grazed in the back paddock waiting for the school day to end.

A school bus was used later used to transport the children to and from school.

Photograph: Uleybury school bus c. 1940’s.
**How did the school day begin?**

The sound of the metal sheaf would inform the students that school was about to begin. Students would form orderly lines outside the front door, boys in one, girls in the other. The students would turn to face the flag, salute it and sing the national anthem, God save the King/Queen.

Before students could enter their hands were inspected for cleanliness. Moving silently into the class the students would stand by their desk until the teacher gave them permission to sit.

**The classroom**

Uleybury was for over 100 years a one roomed school. The teacher would need to be well prepared to teach different lessons to the different age groups, all located in the one place. The teacher resided at the back of the school with their family. Windows were constructed high to minimise student distraction. The open fire place at the end of the room was the only heating provided.

Once long wooden desks with backless benches would have been used. The dual desks were introduced in the 1890’s.

To brighten the class room, teachers would bring in flowers to display, some pictures and maps were on the wall.

**Lessons**

The curriculum was quite clearly set out and teachers were expected to stick to it. The compulsory standard, reading, writing, arithmetic was gradually offset by other subjects such as History, Geography, Singing and Needlework for girls.

The children were expected to learn by rote and were expected to memorise many facts. They spend a lot of time copying work from the blackboard. With only one book for all their subjects, students were trained to be neat.

Copying books were used to teach writing, beginning with strokes and letters and progressing to sentences as one became more skilled. Children were not permitted to write with their left hand. The style of writing was called Copperplate, an ornate style with loops and curves that could be written with speed.

A bird club was formed in 1924 and two budgies purchased from the Gawler show. A ‘museum’ was created for the students, in reality this was just a shelf in the school room. The school also boasted a library, a cupboard of three shelves. Special days such as Arbor day was celebrated.

During the First World War on 15th November 1915 the children attending Miss Lewis’ school, Uley, collected enough funds to purchase a bed
for the wounded soldiers, which was forwarded to Keswick Barracks. They had also given 40 sandbags and were making socks. They also collected £2 6 shillings for the Children’s Hospital.

Photograph: Uleybury students knitting for the war effort.

**DISCIPLINE**

Discipline was strict and enforced. The teacher expected full attention at all times. Children were silent and spoke only when asked to. Toilet breaks were confined to scheduled breaks. If warranted the cane was permitted, with punishment taken on the hands or buttocks. Some clever boys would stick their work books down the back of their trousers hoping the teacher wouldn’t notice and absorb some of the pain. Other punishment included staying in during play times, writing lines or sitting in the corner of the classroom.

Lateness and tardiness was not tolerated.

**OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

Old time games, some of which are still played today included hopscotch, skipping, hops and cats cradle for the girls, while the boys preferred playing marbles or jacks. Games such as rounders and hide ‘n seek were played together.

Uleybury often boasted a large garden of flowers which the children would have tendered. The playground consisted of a seesaw, and large swing made by the fathers at a working bee. A basin of water can be seen in the left hand corner for the children to wash their hands before entering the classroom.

Photograph: Uleybury school front facing Cornishman hill road, 1950.

**TEACHERS**

Men and women could teach, but usually over half were male. Uleybury however had more women teachers than males over the years, the longest serving was Margaret Clucas with 13 years. Women were expected to resign after they married.

**CLOTHING**

1880 to 1920

Girls would wear dresses, up to the neck with gathered sleeves. Often detachable collars were worn, particularly on special occasions. Pinafores or aprons were often worn over dresses to keep their dresses clean. These were often made of lighter material so they could be washed. Socks or long stockings were worn, usually
hand knitted in dark colours. Dark leather boots were worn, and mended and handed down once outgrown.

Boys would wear short pants while teenage boys would have long trousers. Shirts were made of cotton or linen and buttoned up to the neck. Jackets were worn made of heavier fabric. Dark socks or stockings were worn with leather boots. Hats were worn outdoors, made of light straw or felt, usually with a large brim.

Photo: Uleybury students, unknown year

**Further Education**

There were no secondary schools in close proximity to One Tree Hill and the majority of children did not go onto further education. State high schools were established in 1908, with the opening of Adelaide High School. By 1910 there were four high schools in metropolitan Adelaide, and for nearly 40 years this remained the total number: Adelaide, Norwood, Unley and Woodville.

In 1915 the school leaving age was raised to 14 and finally in the mid-1950s the number of high schools was increased.

In the earliest years of South Australia the majority of schools were privately run and fee paying. These included non-denominational and church schools (Anglican, Methodist, Catholic). One would need to be well off to attend these schools.