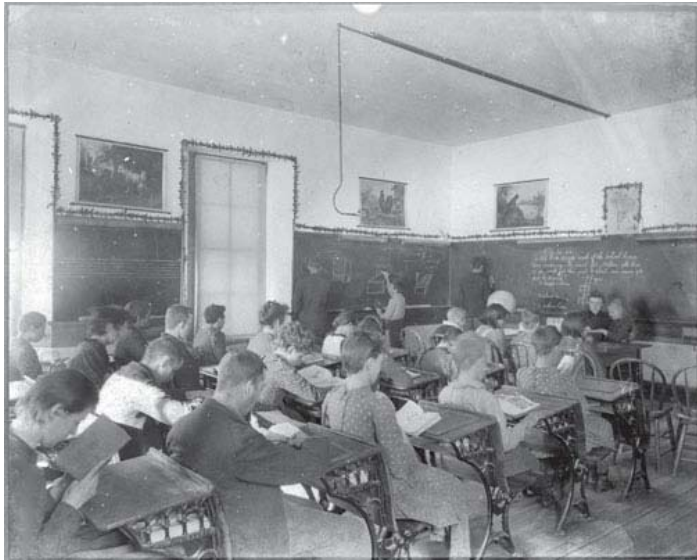


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Teaching contract in June 1881 was very different

Thursday, September 10, 2009
by [Luther Granquist](#)



George H. Knight, the superintendent at what was then called the School for Idiots and Imbeciles at Faribault, wrote to Susie Smith, the teacher he had hired for the school year to begin in September. Knight's letter outlined the terms of Smith's 1881 employment contract:

Dear Miss Smith,

Your salary will be two hundred dollars a year for the first year including food, washing, etc., allowing six weeks vacation. We have twenty-two children whose school hours are from half past eight until half past eleven with a half hour recess, and from half past one till half past three except Saturday when there will be only a morning session.

Two evenings in each week we have dancing and other exercises for one hour and the children meet Sabbath afternoons for an hour's singing. This is the extent of your regular duties except for general oversight which everyone in the house is expected to have.

You will not be required to pass an examination nor need you bring a certificate, but you will have to bear your traveling expenses.

*Yours very truly,
G. H. Knight*

In that era, Knight and other staff members lived in the large building that housed the school. Smith could not continue teaching the following year because of illness. With increased enrollment, the school employed a lead teacher, Miss M. E. Powers, at a salary of \$500 per year, and Hattie Wilson, at a salary of \$200 per year. The schedule and duties remained the same.

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mnddc.org or www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com