

THE FIRST SCHOOL IN SCOTCH PLAINS

The first school house in Scotch Plains was built in 1768 on land given to the Baptist Society by William Darby, who was one of the town's early citizens. Although the boundaries of this land were not very definite, we understand that it was near where the Coles' Monument now stands on the lawn of the present Baptist Church. (See picture on page 5)

According to the original deed, the boundaries were: "land near the Scotch Plains Meeting House to build a school house.....beginning at the white oak saplin by said school house, being the corner of the land where I live, running North East to a stake then South East; then South West two rods to the highway." signed, William Darby.*

The entire area of the school house land was four square rods. Records prove that the only cost for the land was four shillings (96cents) for the sealing and the delivery of the deed.

The school was organized by William Cole, a local surveyor, who was also the first teacher. William Cleaver and the Reverend McHenry were other early teachers. The school was for many years under the direction of The Scotch Plains Baptist School Society, our first Board of Education. Later, on November 26, 1851, the school trustees of Westfield leased the school from the Baptist Society, for ninety-nine years, for ten dollars a year. It became known as District Number 5.

This first school was a one room wooden building. Long desks and backless benches ran the full length of the room. Later double desks were installed. The room was first heated by a fireplace and then by a large pot stove which stood in the middle of the room.

School, at this time, was not compulsory and not all of the children attended. Only those who could afford it and could be spared from work at home were able to go to school. Every three months, each pupil had to pay \$1.87½. From this money the teacher was paid. He averaged about \$90.00 a year. The teacher had to provide the supplies and pay the janitors. The janitors received 12½¢ a term for each child.

If not enough children came to school, the school master

*From the original deed in the Board of Education files, in our High School.