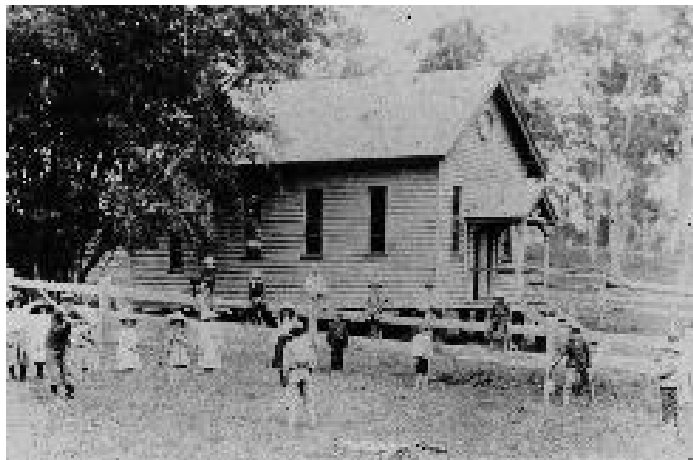


## Bush Schools and Golden Rules - Extract ...

### CHAPTER TWO HOW IT ALL BEGAN

#### Mudgeraba Lower Provisional School

As the selections were gradually taken up, there were a sufficient number of potential pupils living locally to start a provisional school in the central Mudgeraba area. An official application was made to the Department of Public Instruction in May 1877; however, it was to be several years before a new school eventuated.



Finding a suitable building to house the school proved to be a problem. The Presbyterian Church was built in 1890, and it was in this building that Mudgeraba Lower Provisional School opened to receive pupils on 31 March 1892. Thirteen children were enrolled on the inaugural day, twelve pupils being the minimum number of children for which a provisional school may be opened.

The first three children on the roll were members of the Andrews family, children of Isaac and Grace Andrews who were a prominent local family. The Ferguson children were next; their father was the manager of the Mudgeraba Hotel which was owned by William Laver, another renowned citizen. Members of the Laver and Rudd families completed the initial enrolment.

#### CLIFFORD CURTIS

Clifford Curtis was the first head teacher. Born in England in 1864, he was the fifth child in a family of ten. The family migrated to Australia, arriving in Morton Bay on Clifford's third birthday. Eventually they settled in the Cedar Creek area.



As a young man, Clifford moved to Tambourine Mountain and began a saw milling business with two of his brothers on the banks of Cedar Creek. He married Charlotte Neate Franklin, daughter of a local family in 1989 (see photo at right). He was obviously happy with the choice of his bride as in his diary, a few years after the wedding, he states that he considered marrying Lottie (as he called her) was "the best days work" he ever accomplished.

Clifford, however, nurtured a dream to become a teacher. He was admitted into service in 1892 to his first position at Mudgeeraba. He was recommended for the job by Thos A Plunkett, MLA, and by the Head Teacher of Cedar Creek School.

Qualified teachers were categorised as Class I, Class II or Class III teachers, Class I was the most experienced and received much higher wages. Clifford Curtis was a Class III teacher, so he had obviously undergone some studies. Teachers were in such short supply that teaching experience was not necessarily a prerequisite for the position of head teacher at a provisional school; however, the prospective teacher had to be recommended by a school committee or a person of some community standing.

As the only teacher at the school, Clifford Curtis taught all classes. His position commandeered an annual salary of £80, with an additional special allowance of £2 plus a princely sum of six shillings per annum for postage.

His wife, Charlotte, taught needlework at the school, as was the custom. Of course, she received no recompense for her duties as they were regarded as part of her husband's condition of employment. Their place of residence is not known.

Regulation 50 of the Department of Public Instruction stated:- "In mixed state schools, where there is no female assistant, the head teacher's wife (if any) is required to teach needlework to the girls for one hour on two school days each week, which hours must be entered on the timetable. She will be considered a paid member of the school staff; and the teacher's salary will be deemed to include remuneration for her services."

Nineteen additional children enrolled later throughout the year, bringing a total number of thirty-two children enrolled during the first twelve months. 'William' was the most popular boys' name that year, and 'Jessie', the most popular girls' name. The average age of the pupils enrolled during that first year was 8 years and 6 months.

### **HYMN SINGING AND TIMES-TABLES**

The church, which resounded with hymn-singing each Sunday, now echoed with school-room clamour during the week. Parents' occupations were varied and included farmer, hotel-keeper, timber getter, carpenter, station-manager

and (later) bee & poultry. The majority of the children were from families of the Presbyterian faith, however other religions nominated were Roman Catholic and Church of England. Religious denomination registered as 'O D' (other denomination) probably included those from the Lutheran church, as many of the settlers were from German origins.

### **READING AND WRITING AND 'RITHMATIC**

The curriculum included reading, object lessons, writing, arithmetic, drill, music, history, mechanics and needlework. The solid basis of teaching was still, however, the three "Rs". In 1892, an optional Class Six was added to the Queensland school curriculum. Learning was by rote and the virtues of discipline and self control ruled the classroom. The teacher's abilities, or sometimes lack of, determined the tone of the school.

Initially, there were few Australian based textbooks however, by 1892 there were several available, such as the Royal Readers, Blackie's Century Readers, and Blackwoods Geographical Readers.

Mudgeeraba, in 1892, could have been described more as a community, rather than a village. Close to the church-cum- school stood the only commercial premises, the 'Mudgeraba Hotel', which was also the staging post for the mail coach. The road into Mudgeeraba from the north took a similar route to the present-day Mudgeeraba Road, then followed Old Coach Road to Springbrook Road and doubled back to the present intersection of Franklin Drive and Somerset Drive, to the pub. The mail coaches headed south along Hardy's Road and over the Bonogin hills, to Tallebudgera.

William Ferguson was the manager of the hotel. The 1892-3 Postal Directory lists Mudgeeraba as *Postal district only, no township; Presbyterian Church; Provisional School; agriculture and timber getting*. Inhabitants were listed as farmers or as occupations concerning the timber industry, such as timber getter, teamster or Mudgeeraba Saw Mills employees or manager.

In April, Clifford Curtis informed the Department on his first School Return for Mudgeraba Provisional School that:

I began to teach on the 31st ultimo. The school was closed on the 29th ultimo in order to celebrate Arbor Day; but I regarded it as contrary to Regulation 58 to enter the fact because Arbor Day is included among the regular holidays inserted in Regulation 145.

Arbor Day was celebrated annually in all Queensland schools after 1890. It was a day when emphasis was placed on tree planting and beautification of the school grounds, promoting an interest in the local flora and early conservationalist ideas.

Wet weather closed the little school several times during that first year. The Inspector's Report, made by District Inspector John Shirley on October 24,

1892, reveals that "the character of the discipline is very good. The moral tone appears to be sound and wholesome ... and general behaviour is timid, but otherwise pleasing ... the boy in Class II and another in I(b) were quite unable to sound aspirated syllables".

John Shirley was an Inspector in the South Coast region for many years. He came to Australia, one of the intake of British teachers, in 1878, later working up the ranks in the Department to become a District Inspector. By December 1892, there were 24 children on the roll, and an average daily attendance for the month of December of fourteen children, complying with provisional school regulations.

### **WIELDING THE WILLOW**

Disobedience and Impertinence were rewarded with *one blow with cane* and Dirty Exercises resulted in *two blows*. Regulation 124 in the 1892 Department of Public Instruction directive states:

Head teachers are authorised to administer corporal punishment in their schools. It is not, however, to be inflicted for trivial breaches of school discipline, but may be employed for offences against morality, for gross impertinence, and for willful and persistent disobedience, and for these only as a last resort. All degrading and injurious modes of punishment – such as boxing children's ears, unnatural and long-continued attitudes of restraint such as standing, kneeling, and the like – are strictly prohibited.

### **THE OLD BUSH SCHOOL**

While the thought of the one-teacher bush school may stir nostalgic memories in some, the reality was, in fact, quite different. Fortunately, compared to many other bush schools of the time, the two schools that operated in the Mudgeeraba area during the latter part of the nineteenth century were quite civilised dwellings.

It was departmental policy that first preference at a one-teacher school was given to a married man and it was an unspoken condition of the husband's employment that the wife taught sewing to the female students for two hours a week, for which no remuneration was received.

As well as having the duty of teaching up to six grades at one time, sometimes in generally unsuitable quarters, the head teacher was official cleaner and clerk as well. Regular bookwork that required attention during the course of the school year was the Monthly Returns which gave weekly data on attendances and enrolments, Annual Returns, and after 1900, Compulsory Attendance Reports which were submitted every six months and reported on those children who had not attended school for at least sixty days during that period.

The Admission Register was also required to be kept up-to-date, and class promotions were also recorded in this register. It was no wonder that the occasional bush teacher queried the values of temperance.

---

**MUDGERABA LOWER PROVISIONAL SCHOOL  
PUPIL REGISTER 1892**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Admin #</u>	<u>Years attended.</u>
ANDREWS, Bessie	1	1892 - 1898
ANDREWS, Ida	2	1892 - 1893
ANDREWS, Jessie	31	1892 - 1902
ANDREWS, Robert	3	1892 - 1900
FERGUSON, Agnes	24	1892 - 1894
FERGUSON, Alex	4	1892 - 1896
FERGUSON, Anne	5	1892 - 1895
FERGUSON, Jessie	27	1892 - 1892
FERGUSON, John	6	1892 - 1895
FERGUSON, Walter	12	1892 - 1892
FERGUSON, William	13	1892 - 1893
FERGUSON, William	32	1892 - 1893
LAVER, Beatrice	7	1892 - 1900
LAVER, Martha	8	1892 - 1892
MCLEOD, Florence	28	1892 - 1892
RUDD, Joseph	11	1892 - 1898
RUDD, Mary	10	1892 - 1897
RUDD, Nellie	9	1892 - 1895
RUDD, Reginald	23	1892 - 1894
RUDD, Robert	14	1892 - 1894
SILCOX, Rachel	17	1892 - 1892
SILCOX, Randal	19	1892 - 1892
SILCOX, Rosa	18	1892 - 1892
SMITH, Charles	15	1892 - 1892
SMITH, Nellie	16	1892 - 1892
STANFIELD, Frank	30	1892 - 1896
STARKEY, William G	25	1892 - 1893
STARKEY, Jessie	26	1892 - 1893
VEIVERS, James	20	1892 - 1892
VEIVERS, Robert	21	1892 - 1896
VEIVERS, William	22	1892 - 1896
WELSH, Fanny	29	1892 - 1893



This is the earliest surviving photograph of Mudgeraba Lower provisional School pupils – taken in 1894. The teacher was Mr Bensted.

© Robyn Lee Burrows - This text is for personal use only and may not be reproduced in any form without permission from the author.