

Third Grade Students at the Rock School in Attendance in 1858 **Here is your personal “Time Line”:**

It is once again time for “Rock School Day” in Colebrook. Each year the third grade spends the entire day at the Rock School, now a museum owned by the Colebrook Historical Society. This compilation is to help the students and their parents have a better feel for the times they have traveled back to. The Rock School was in use from 1779 until 1911. The year of 1858 has been chosen because the desks reflect that general time period. The American flag that you will fly over the school has 32 stars, reflecting the number of states in the Union that year.

This is one of the happiest days in the entire school year for the students.

Your birth year is **1849**. Your parents, besides talking about the exciting new “event” in their family, were also discussing these topics:

Gold has recently been discovered in California, and although they may have been tempted to head westward with the hope of getting rich, they had a new baby to think about, and obviously made the decision to remain in Colebrook, otherwise you wouldn't be sitting in the Rock School!

Your mother's sister, (your favorite aunt), who lives in New York City, sent you a book just printed by a Danish man by the name of Hans Christian Andersen. Nobody in Colebrook had ever heard of him, but the fairy tales he wrote would become every child's, and most adult's favorites for hundreds of years. When you are 3 or 4 years old, your folks will begin to read them to you.

A man invented a product that you will think is quite cool, but your parents, and especially your teacher (who will not let you so much as bring it into school down at the bottom of your deepest pocket), will hate it. The inventor called his invention “chewing gum”.

The Mexican War ended last year. This event will be observed with a sense of relief in Colebrook, as we lost at least one of our sons in that conflict. He is buried in the Beech Hill Cemetery with the name of the town in Mexico where he died on his headstone.

James K. Polk was president of the United States, and there are 32 stars in the American flag.

In your first year, when you didn't care about much, you will be happy to know that you didn't miss out on any excitement! We did get a new president, Zachary Taylor. That information didn't even get a yawn out of you!

1850 Nothing exciting happened this year for you. Your father is pretty excited about the new president dying in office after only one year and four months, but your mother couldn't have cared less. What did get her attention were the new spring fashions that turned away from a style known as “simplicity” to one that she described as “ornamental elegance”. Bonnets, mantels and dresses were trimmed with puffings of net, lace and flowers.

1851 Well, you are now two years old, and probably aren't going to be very excited about what happened in the world around you except for one thing: The United States on this date began to make a brand-new coin, a three cent silver coin a little smaller than a dime. The reason you know about this is because your father brought one home and gave

it to you to be your very own. Your mother kept it in a pretty china cup so that it wouldn't get lost, but every once in awhile she would take it out and let you play with it on the kitchen table. You will keep this coin for many years, until one day you will make a present of it to your first grandchild.

The older boys and young men are all talking about the latest change in the game of baseball; now, for the first time the players wear uniforms. These uniforms didn't look anything like the uniforms we use today; the players wore straw hats, white shirts and blue, full-length pants.

Sometime during the year, your father brought home a brand-new product, made by a man named Gail Borden, who lived in Torrington, and had a big dairy farm up by Highland Lake in Winsted. He called his new invention "evaporated milk". It is still being made today, and is sold all over the world. At the time, however, you weren't impressed; you spit out the sample your mother offered to you and wouldn't let another drop pass your lips until you were ten years old!

1852 Your neighbors to the north, in Massachusetts, have a new school law. This law says that all children ages 8-14 are required to attend 12 weeks of school per year, 6 of those weeks had to be consecutive.

1853 Nothing of interest this year for you. We elected a new president, Mr. Franklin Pierce, but even your father wasn't interested.

1856 You had forgotten it by now, but 'way back in 1851, your father brought home a new product called evaporated milk. Well guess what – Mr. Borden has come up with a new product; this one he calls "condensed milk". You were asked to try this also, but you weren't about to be a guinea pig again, so you never got to taste this new product!

1857 Remember your little silver 3-cent coin? This year you were given another coin; this one is also silver, but ever so much larger than the 3-cent piece. This one your father calls a Spanish Milled Dollar, and it is as big around as the ink well on your desk. The reason you got lucky and ended up with this wonderful coin was because our government passed a law that these coins could no longer be used to make purchases. From now on, only American coins would be legal.

1858 You probably don't know it, but something was invented this year that you really will like; it will be a little while before the Colebrook schools use them, but something called a steel pen was invented. By the time you grow up and have children of your own, they will ask you if it is true that when you were their age, you used a feather to write with. You will reply that yes, yours was the last American generation to have learned to write using a quill pen.

Well, we have brought you up to date. These are the events that happened while you grew up, at least until the 4th grade. In just a few short years the Civil War will be fought. You are very lucky to be the age you are, because you will be too young to be called up to fight in this war, which took many thousands of lives, one of whom was Colebrook's own Edward Carrington, whose uniform jacket will be displayed in the Colebrook Historical Society. Your great, great, great, great grandson or granddaughter will be fascinated by the hole from the bullet that took his life just 4 short weeks before the end of that war.