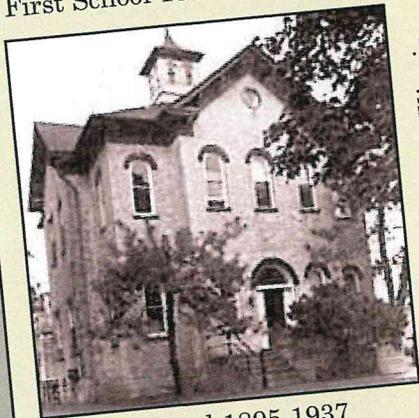


# Blast to the Past

presented by  
Itasca Historical Commission

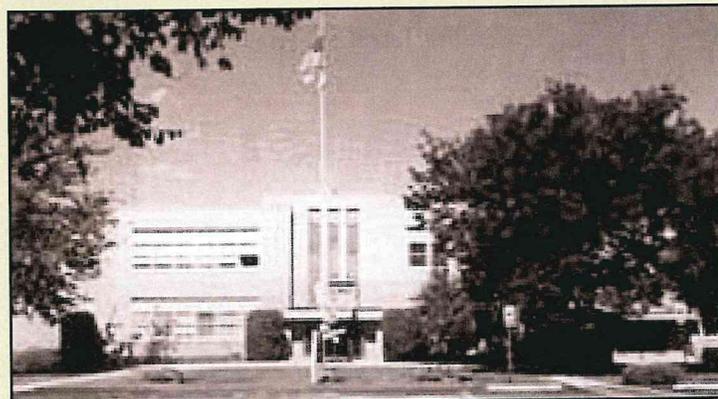


First School 1860-1890



Second School 1895-1937

Early schools in Itasca, Illinois.



Itasca Peacock Middle School, formerly known as the Itasca Grade School and North School—1939-Present.



# Blast to the Past

“Blast to the Past” will give you a glimpse into what life was like in Itasca, Illinois in 1890.

## Part 1. Your Bedroom

The year is 1890. It's 6:00 a.m. and you are waking up in one of the original houses in the new village called Itasca. The sun may have woken you up, or maybe the rooster out back or the Grandfather clock downstairs chiming six times, but it definitely was not a clock radio.

Hopefully you closed the shutters outside your windows before you went to bed last night. The shutters help keep the light out, and protect the rare and very costly glass in your windows.

You notice your room is chilly this morning. It will get warmer once someone

lights the wood stove in the kitchen below and the heat comes through the open grille in your floor.

Don't bother looking inside the house for the bathroom. It's out back in a special little building with a half-moon on the door called an outhouse.

Your house has a “washroom” with a dry sink and a basin for washing. One of your chores is to pump water from an outside well and carry it into the house in a pail. The water is heated on the stove for washing and the dirty water is thrown out the kitchen door when done.

1. What things do you have in your bedroom?

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2. How is your bedroom heated?

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3. Draw a picture of what your bedroom looks like in 1890.

4. List the differences between your 1890 bedroom and how it looks today, or make the right side of your drawing look like your room looks today.

Your Bedroom of 1890

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Your Bedroom of Today

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5. When nature calls where do you go?

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Outhouse

6. How do you wash up?

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Pitcher & Basin

## Part 2. Clothing

In 1890 people are participating in more sports, such as bicycling, swimming, golf, and tennis. Clothing is less restrictive and more specific to the activity.

Women wear leg-o-mutton sleeve shirts with mannish ties and cuff buttons, and long skirts with belts. They wear high button boots during the day and thin slippers at night.

Men wear morning coats and suits with shirts



Fashions of the 1890s.

and buttoned waistcoats. Shirts are starched with turn-over collars during the day and stand-up collars at night.

The sailor suit is popular for boys and girls. Boys wear short trousers to their knees with stockings attached to suspenders worn around their waists. Young girls wear short pleated skirts and long pleated skirts are worn by older girls.

7. What clothes do you wear in 1890?

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8. Draw a picture of what your clothes look like in 1890 and today.

### Part 3. Breakfast

Early in the morning while breakfast is cooking your family begins its daily chores. Your brother brings in coal or wood to heat the stove. Your sister gathers eggs from the chickens. You help your father feed the livestock and your mother cooks breakfast.

Food in 1890 is not precooked; it is always fresh which takes a long time to prepare. Eggs come from your chickens and milk comes from your cows or Geils Cheese & Butter Factory on Elm Street where a creek runs through the factory's basement to keep the milk, cheese, and butter cool.

For breakfast your mother might serve bread, oatmeal biscuit rolls, griddle cakes, muffins, oatmeal, milk, eggs, or jellies. Griddle cakes are like pancakes but the ingredients come from the pantry instead of a box. Biscuits are made from recipes like this one:

3 cups boiling water  
1 cup oatmeal  
1 scant teaspoon salt

Pour the water on the oatmeal; add the salt and cook three hours in a double boiler. While still warm, add one large tablespoonful of butter and half a cup of sugar. When cool, add half a cup of yeast, and flour to make a stiff dough. Let rise over night. In the morning bake in gem pans twenty minutes or till brown.

(From the Mrs. Lincoln's Boston Cookbook, copyright 1883, by Mrs. D. A. Lincoln.)

Your cast iron oven burns wood, coal, oil, or gas. The oven has a fire box with a space underneath to collect ashes and

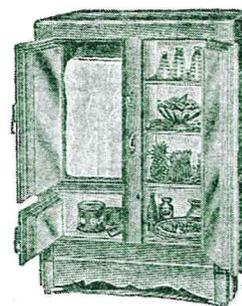


Cast Iron Oven

a damper for hot air and smoke to escape through the chimney. Your mother watches the flame height and color to know where the hottest and coldest spots in the oven are. She opens and closes the door quickly so heat is not lost.

Your mother stores food in a pantry located in the basement, an underground root cellar, or an ice box. The pantry has shelves to store dry goods and canned fruits and vegetable. Foods are canned so your family can eat them throughout the year.

The root cellar has good circulation and humidity to keep fresh foods like potatoes and smoked or salted meats from spoiling. Milk, eggs, and fresh meats are kept in an ice box in the kitchen. An ice box contains a large block of ice to keep foods cool.



Ice Box

9. What do you eat for breakfast?

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10. What kind of stove is in your kitchen?

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11. Where is your food stored?

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12. Is the family up? If so, what are they doing?

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13. Draw a picture of what your kitchen looked like in 1890.



## Part 4. Work

It's Monday, that means washday. In 1890 it takes a whole day to do the family laundry.

Your mother starts by adding more wood to the stove. She gets buckets of cold water from the well and fills a large boiler on the stove to boil water. While the water gets hot she sets up the wash tubs and scrub board on a wooden bench (outside if the weather is nice). After the clothes are washed, she wrings out the water and



Laundry Day

hangs the wash on a clothesline to dry.

Your mother also churns butter, bakes, feeds the chickens, and tends the vegetable garden. Gardens are an important part of your meals. Every family needs a garden to survive.

Your father is probably a farmer. He goes to the barn early to milk the cows and to take care of the horses. After breakfast he works in the field most of the day. If he is not a farmer, he might work in the lumber yard or blacksmith shop, or drive a wagon and deliver ice, dairy products, or hay.

14. What will the rest of the family be doing while you are at school?

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15. What kind of work does your mother do?

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Kitchen

16. What kind of work does your father do?

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Lumberyard

## Part 5. School

After breakfast you head to school. The street is busy with horses, buggies, and delivery wagons. If you live in town you have a quick walk to school; if not, you have to get up early because you may have to walk a couple of miles. On a lucky day, you may be able to hitch a ride on someone's wagon.

The two-story schoolhouse sits on a large hill on Elm Street. The school is tan with red trim and is the only brick building in Itasca. The building is crowned with a white cupola and a bell rings when school starts.

Architect and builder A.G. Chessman designed the schoolhouse. He built the boiler in a small building away from the school to prevent a fire in the schoolhouse. Many schoolhouse fires are caused from hot stoves and flue pipes, but your school is safer.

There are two rooms in the schoolhouse. One is on the first floor for

grades 1-4 and the other is on the second for grades 5-8. The classrooms have tall narrow windows and bare wooden floors. The wooden desks with wrought iron sides and legs are lined up in rows.

The classrooms are heated by radiators along the walls kept hot by the boiler. Water is pumped from an outdoor well and the outhouses are behind the school. On dark days, kerosene lamps are used for reading.

Your class learns reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and history.

Sometimes the class reads poetry, sings new songs, practices drawing and painting, and stages plays and pageants for the community.

Students help the teacher hand out and collect papers. Younger students clean chalk out of the erasers by banging them together outside. You sometimes carry in water from the well for drinking or washing the blackboards.



Itasca Second School

17. As you leave for school, what sort of transportation is on the street?

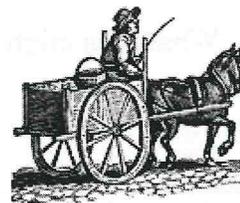
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Horse & Cart

18. How are you going to get to school?

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19. Where in Itasca is your school located? What is the name of the street it is on?

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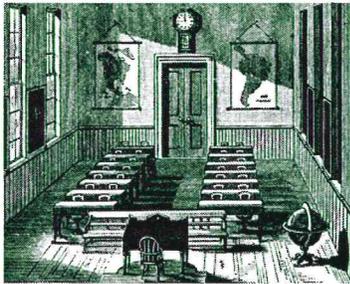
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20. What does the outside of your school look like?

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One-room Schoolhouse

21. What does the inside of your school look like? How many classrooms are there?

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22. What subjects do you learn?

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Weights and Measurements

23. What jobs might your teacher ask you to do?

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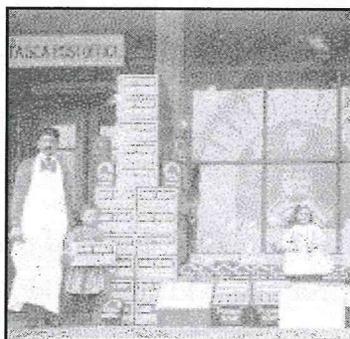
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### Part 6. After School

The school bell rings and school is dismissed for the day. Students gather in the schoolyard and play hop-sotch, marbles, and jacks before going home.

Today you play Blindman's Bluff. You are blindfolded and turned around several times. Then you walk around, reaching out with your hands until you catch someone and correctly identify that player by touch only.



Itasca General Store

The stalker tries to catch the deer while the deer avoids being caught. The audience and players are silent so the players can listen for each other.

It's time to start head home for chores and homework. Along the way you pass through Itasca's business district. Customers carry purchases from the general store, lumber is being loaded into wagons, and metal is being hammered in the

Other days you play Deer Stalking where two players are blindfolded and placed on opposite sides of a large object.

blacksmith shop. A train has just arrived at the depot bringing passengers and material to Itasca.



Hoop & Stick

24. What do you do after school? What kinds of games do you play?

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25. What are some of the businesses you might see in 1890?

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Mill

26. Will any of these businesses still be in Itasca after 100 years?

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**Part 7. Present-Day Itasca**

Your time in 1890 Itasca is now over. You wake up and are back to the present.

27. Which buildings in present-day Itasca were around in 1890?

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28. Pick one building that was in Itasca in 1890 and find the year it was built. (Hint: Look at the date plaque located near its front door.) If the building was a home, what family lived there? If the building was a business, what business was located there?

Building Description	Year Built	House or Type of Business	Family Name or Business Name
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29. Draw a picture of one building that existed in Itasca in 1890.



## Things To Do and Think About

1. You are now a junior historian. Use your new historian skills to make a scrapbook with sketches or photographs of buildings located in the Itasca Historic District.
2. Pick one particular building and check out its history. Find photographs of the building throughout the years.
3. If a young person from 1890 came to your home, how would you answer the following questions they might ask about your life?

“Where does your water come from?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What’s a TV?” \_\_\_\_\_

“How does a horseless carriage (car) run?” \_\_\_\_\_

Make your own list of questions the person from 1890 might ask you.

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4. Ask your parents questions about their lives before you were born.

“How old were you when you got your first car?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What were your favorite foods when you were my age?” \_\_\_\_\_

“What TV programs were popular when you were my age?” \_\_\_\_\_

5. Make a family tree showing your grandparents, parents, you, and your brothers and sisters. Where was everyone born and where did they live?

Relative’s Name	Relation to You	Birth Date	Where They Lived
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

6. Gather information about three important people, three events, or three places of importance in Itasca.



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## Itasca Historical District

North	North Street, between Catalpa Street and Cherry Street
South	Bloomington Road, between Irving Park Road and Forest Avenue
East	Cherry Street, between Irving Park Road and Schiller Street
West	Catalpa Avenue, between Irving Park Road and North Street

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