

## The History Center in Tompkins County

is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to help people use the tools of history to understand the past, gain perspective on the present, and play an informed role in shaping the future.

In order to accomplish this mission we preserve and encourage access to The History Center's unique collections; seek out the diverse needs and interests of our community; design learning experiences and provide services that respond to those needs; create opportunities for people to learn about themselves and their place in the world; and provide a neutral environment for public discussions that bring historical perspective to current issues.

Learn more at [www.thehistorycenter.net](http://www.thehistorycenter.net).

### Books for Additional Reading:

#### ***One Room School***, by Laurence P. Pringle.

A look back at events and the changing of the seasons at a one room school in rural New York during the last year of World War II.

#### ***Going to School in 1876***, by John J. Loeper.

Describes the life of school children in 1876 – their dress, teachers, books, lessons, discipline, and pastimes.

***The One-Room School at Squabble Hollow***, by Rosemarie Hausherr. Text and pictures bring to life days at a one-room school in northern Vermont that has been functioning for more than 100 years.



4th Grade Discovery Trail Site:

**THE HISTORY CENTER**  
in Tompkins County

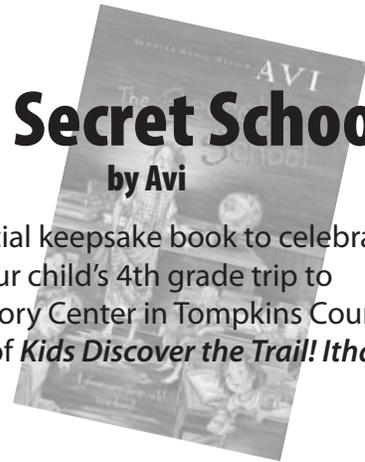
401 East State Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
(one block east of the Ithaca Commons)  
607.273.8284  
[www.thehistorycenter.net](http://www.thehistorycenter.net)

Exhibits &  
Research Library Hours:  
Open: T, TH & SAT, 11 am-5pm  
(and by appointment)  
Closed: major holidays,  
SUN, M, W & F

## The Secret School

by Avi

is a special keepsake book to celebrate your child's 4th grade trip to The History Center in Tompkins County as part of *Kids Discover the Trail! Ithaca*



Dear Fourth Grader,

"The Secret School" by Avi is a wonderful complement to your *Living History* trip to the 8 Square Schoolhouse. The story takes place in 1925, and describes how fourteen year-old Ida Bidson secretly takes over as the teacher when the one room schoolhouse in her remote Colorado area unexpectedly closes.

The first two activities that follow in this handout compare a child's life in 1925 to life today, and the last two activities relate directly to the 8 Square Schoolhouse visit, which depicts life in the 1890's.



**IPEI**  
Ithaca Public Education Initiative



### ***Kids Discover the Trail! Ithaca*** (KDT! Ithaca)

is a collaboration of the

- **Ithaca Public Education Initiative**
- **Discovery Trail**
- **Ithaca City School District**

to provide curriculum-based field trips to the eight sites of the Discovery Trail for Ithaca City School District students grades pre-K through 5.

For more on KDT! visit: [www.kidsdiscoverthetrail.org](http://www.kidsdiscoverthetrail.org)  
[www.ipei.org](http://www.ipei.org)  
[www.discoverytrail.com](http://www.discoverytrail.com)

## Newspaper Activity

Look at the local newspaper for two to four weeks. Find articles about local schools and bring them into the classroom, including editorials about local school issues. Mount them on a bulletin board and have class discussions about how schools have changed from the days of one room schools.



- What are the issues facing today's schools?
- How is school different and how is it the same from the days when Ida went to school? How would Ida's schooling be different today given her age, for example?

## Make a Tin Lunch Pail

Make a tin lunch pail and bring your lunch in it when you visit the 8 Square Schoolhouse. There were no school cafeterias in the 19th century, so everyone brought their lunch from home, where all the food was homemade.



Start with a clean 29 oz. tin can. Have a parent or teacher help you to punch one hole on each side of the can near the top using a nail and hammer. Thread wire or a small rope through the holes and tie, making the handle.

On a piece of cloth, trace a circle about 6-7 inches in diameter; a dessert plate is about the right size to trace. Cut out the circle. This will be the cover to put over the food in your lunch pail.

## Discussion About Girls' Roles in 1925 versus Today

(Adapted from *The Secret School Teachers Guide* by Jan McDonald)



In the book, Mr. Jordan says:

*I'm not sure a girl needs a high school education.*

- Do you know anyone who would say this today?
- What types of jobs were available to girls in 1925?
- What types of jobs are available to girls today?
- How have the roles of girls and women changed in the last century?



**Eight Square** Schoolhouse on Upper Hanshaw Rd. was built as a one-room school in 1827 by local carpenter Henry Balcom. It is one of Tompkins County's finest local landmarks, the earliest school still existing in Tompkins County, and the only brick octagonal schoolhouse left standing in NY State.

Eight Square Schoolhouse is the location of The History Center's day-long Living History program that gives area fourth graders an opportunity to experience a day at school in 1892. Students engage in such activities as pen-and-ink penmanship lessons, reading aloud from primers of the day, and outdoor recess with period games. Students are encouraged to dress the part and bring lunches that replicate what their great-great grandparents might have taken to school.