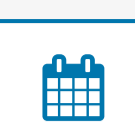


# Today in History - April 1

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## April Fool!

**April 1**, commonly known as April Fool's day, has long been an opportunity for children to tease their teachers. In an interview with a writer employed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, Mrs. Sally Marlowe of Marion, South Carolina, recalled:

*We used to run off in the woods on April Fools' Day and stay till twelve o'clock noon come — then we would all show up to the schoolhouse. What you reckon they done to us for it? Kept us in school so late every evening that week till the moon would be shining bright enough to show us the road home.*

"The Skippers." Sally and Willie Marlowe, interviewees; Annie Ruth Davis, interviewer; Marion, South Carolina, January 19, 1939. [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#). Manuscript Division



Old Heidelberg, c1905. [Detroit Publishing Company](#). Prints & Photographs Division



Rural School near Milton, North Dakota, 1913 Miss Margaret McKay, teacher [↗](#). Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection. [Digital Horizons: Life on the Northern Plains](#) [↗](#). North Dakota State University Libraries, Institute for Regional Studies



Interior of "little red schoolhouse." Crossville, Tennessee. 1935. [Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives](#). Prints & Photographs Division

Dr. Samuel Lathan recollected engaging in similar antics while attending "an old field school" near his childhood home in Fairfield County, South Carolina.

*April the 1st was dreaded by most rural school teachers. The pupils would get inside and bar the teacher out. The teacher, who didn't act on the principle that discretion is the better part of valor, generally got the worst of it. Mr. Douglass soon learned this, and, on April Fool's Day, he would walk to the school, perceive the situation, laughingly announce there would be no school until the morrow, and leave.*

Dr. Samuel B. Lathan. W.W. Dixon, interviewer; Winnsboro, South Carolina, June 28, 1938. [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#). Manuscript Division

## Learn More

- Search on *April Fool* in [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#) to find more tales of pranks and shenanigans. If your taste runs to practical jokes, take a look at "[How Snipe Hunting Was Invented](#)," in which pioneer Steve Robertson tells how one Brad Slocum, "one of these tender-actin' persons that was always wantin' somebody else to do it," got his just desserts.
- Search on *dog*, *humorous pictures*, or *animals in human situations* to find more silly pictures in the [Detroit Publishing Company](#) digital collection.
- The online collection [The American Variety Stage: Vaudeville and Popular Entertainment, 1870-1920](#) contains many examples of comedy routines performed by vaudeville entertainers, including [ten audio recordings](#). For a good laugh, tune in to "Henry's Music Lesson," or appreciate a time-tested joke routine to the accompaniment of a fiddler playing "The Arkansas Traveler." Or, listen to performers imitate various sounds such as a sawmill and a dog fight in "A Study in Mimicry."
- Search on *joke* in the collection [Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1870 to 1885](#) to find humorous songs such as "[Too Thin; or, Darwin's Little Joke](#)" by O'Rangoutang.
- The digital collection [Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies](#) includes many films in video format from the Library's collection of early copyrighted paper print films. Many early films show comic routines. *The Unappreciated Joke*, filmed by Thomas Edison, Inc. in 1903, shows a man on a subway attempting to entertain a fellow passenger who is not amused.
- In another early film, *An Animated Luncheon*, filmed February 1900, Edison exploits the newly discovered possibilities of film-splicing to create a gag.

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