

WERE THEY THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

Prepared for Daniel Sutton by Dorothy Nally, April 5, 1983

The Fairview School was a one room school building situated a mile north of the Clay Sutton home on the old Highway 30. It had an attached cloakroom where students hung their coats and deposited their lunches and other items during school. Children were summoned to class by a bell which hung in the belfry on top the building, and was rung by pulling on a rope that hung down into the classroom. The grades, from one to eight, were taught by Mr. Borton, who did all the teaching of these eight grades, plus had the duty of keeping the building clean and tidy. The building was heated by a huge wood and coal stove which stood near one end of the room. Our room seemed ample in size, with rows of old fashioned single desks, and also a few of the older style desks at which two students sat together and studied. All desks had ink wells, and a groove on top to keep pencils from rolling off. A hand carved paddle hung on the wall near the teacher's desk. I remember it being used when necessary to keep the big boys in line. I can recall a number of times that I observed it being used on my brothers. In the event that it was broken while being used, another soon replaced it on the wall.

Approximately 20 students comprised the eight grades, between the ages of 5 and 15 years. Because of the number of grades, classes could not recite each subject daily. However, we were accustomed to working independently, and were busy with our lessons while other classes were being held.

Most students walked to school the year round, no matter how far they lived from school. It was considered good exercise and parents were too busy with farming and making a living for their families to take children to school. Once in a while a farmer would be going in the direction of his field, or his neighbors, and could be seen hauling his

We were interested in the recitations of other grades and gleaned much information from listening to older children's lessons. When it was time for our class, we gathered around a homemade wooden table with our teacher, or simply sat together on a recitation bench in the front of the room. Our subjects consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, history and geography, with little emphasis on science.

When we were dismissed for recesses or our full hour at noon, we had lots of fun. The older students looked after the younger ones, and all were allowed to participate in the games, such as baseball or tag. Perhaps all were needed to have complete teams. We seemed more like a big family, with older students caring for the younger ones when there were skinned knees or other injuries. There was much concern also, for little ones with 'hurt' feelings. I can't remember there being jealousies among the children, and they were seldom cruel to each other.

Each student brought his or her lunch in those days, for there was no such thing as a hot lunch program. Lunches were brought in paper sacks, 5 lb. lard pails, or 'store-bought' lunch buckets for those who were lucky enough to afford them. In the good weather we sat outside in the shade of the building, or in the wild grass or weeds which covered part of the school ground to eat our lunches. In extreme weather, of course, our lunches were eaten inside.

children to school on his big hay wagon. In winter the same hayrack was used, but with sled runners under it. Most of the time, however, all the students walked, regardless of weather conditions.

The school was the hub of the community in those days. There were always evening programs put on by the teacher and

students for special days and holidays. At such programs, each student had something special to recite on the improvised stage at the front of the room. Since people did not go out of their community for entertainment, these occasions were very special and enjoyable. Food was usually prepared for these special evenings by the mothers, and everyone filled up before returning home. As I think back

to school days of the 1920's and 1930's, I have fond memories of the closeness of the people of the community. There have been many changes since then. Most of all, it seems the end of an era when neighbors were really neighbors to each other, and had more fun visiting back and forth in each other's homes than we do now driving many miles to other towns for entertainment.