

Nine O'clock Scholars

By Zella Loomer, as told to the Editor

Mother was born in 1872 in a log house about three farms north of Siloam Church northwest of Eagle. When she was old enough, she started off with slate, book and dinner bucket to Stone school on the southeast corner of the present junction of Z and N.

She, Emma Gilbert, remembered so many details of her eight years there. From 1877 to 1886, her teachers included Mary Griffin, Mr. Chambers, Orley Wilbur, Amelia Demerest, Tillie Elting, Mamie Boone, Edward Aplin, Hannah Boyle, Hattie Holsinger, and Arthur Thorne (Liza Gilbert called him "Mr. Rosebush") . . . And the scholars, more than fifty of them came from 24 families: Burton, Peardon, Stacey, Lean, Ball, Williams, Gates, Allen, Charley, Norris, Biglow, Carlin, Crerar, Medland, Joliff, Aplin, two families of Uglows, two of Pipers and three of Gilberts.

Pupils sat two in a seat, first on benches, later on seats that turned up for easier sweeping. Teacher started the wood fire in the stove and did the sweeping. Sometimes she or he boarded at Staceys', going home for lunch at noon, and leaving her pupils alone at school.

School started at nine and ended at four o'clock, with an hour noon and recesses at 10:45 and 2:30. All pupils went home at the same time because the older children had to walk home with the young ones, as they dawdled and played with the chipmunks along the stone and rail fences.

Youngsters brought cold lunches packed in tiny pails, usually including a Cornish pasty (with the fold along the top, not the side). Sometimes this was the main item of food including mutton and vegetables; but often it was dessert made of apples and rich Devonshire cream. They drank water from a wooden bucket and tin dipper hauled over from Charles Sherman's (east of school), or Tom Burton's (southwest of school).

Ringling the bell was a special privilege. At first it was a handbell, but later a big bell was mounted on the roof of the schoolhouse. Teacher's other equipment included her long blackboard across the whole front of the room, a globe, and kerosene lamps for dark days or evening meetings, or classes.

When her pupils became unruly, Teacher either shook them, stood them in the corner, kept them after school, or made them apologize. She taught them reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and physiology.

If Teacher could lead, the day began with singing. Miss Holsinger was especially talented, and so they sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee," "Forty Little Urchins," "Down in a Diving Bell," "Work for the Night is Coming," "Hold the Fort," "Yield Not to Temptation," "Yankee Doodle," and "'Tis the Age of Progress." Miss Holsinger also taught evening classes in writing and spelling for parents and pupils. McGuffey's Readers, and other books were handed down to younger members of the

family until they wore out.

Youngsters memorized many poems and prose . . . some to be a source of joy and inspiration for a lifetime. Pupils were not allowed to make up stories or draw pictures, for such was considered a waste of time. There was very little "homework"; but school spirit was high when they visited rival neighboring schools for spelling bees and box social programs.

Community customs and status appeared in dress and correctness of behavior and speech. Girls always wore aprons (except Mabel Uglow, who never did) and high-top shoes. Most youngsters went barefoot in warm weather. Most wore sulphur bags around their necks to protect against colds. Some had Chicken Pox, Measles and Scarlet Fever.

What kind of games did they play? Pom-pom Pull Away, Hide and Seek, Drop the Handkerchief, Ring Around Rosie, and Crack the Whip. Boys played baseball, marbles and mumblety Peg; girls played jacks and sometimes brought their dolls. All went coasting in winter, usually across the road to the north where the slope took them down to Beaver Dam Lake. They didn't skate much because of the weeds.

Hunting for wild flowers and pretty stones were favorite activities, too; gathering and making daisy chains, drapes of oak leaves, a rare pond lily, violets, and harebells (Grandfather Greybeards). They were gathered with care, displayed eagerly and treasured.

Promotions in school was recognized by advancement to a harder reader, there were no grades or marks.

Teacher ended the academic year at Stone School near Eagle with "Reward of Merit" cards and "Last Day" cards given out at special exercises attended by the scholars and their families.



Main Street in Dousman Back in 1918
Picture contributed by Paul Hoffmann, who lives near Wales.