

Charles Cox and Wife Were First To Settle in Hamlet Called Jericho

A tiny one-room schoolhouse creaks and twists in each winter's air as it has these many years at the once active hamlet called Jericho.

Gertrude Goodrich taught the first school at Jericho on the border between Mukwonago and Eagle towns. Both towns claim her as their first teacher.

Four years before that Charles Cox with his wife and children came to section 19, living in their covered wagon. Thomas Sugden and Joseph Smart found them there in June of 1836. The Coxes were the first in the area, and Charles Cox was the first white man to die. His was the first grave in the little cemetery set aside then just over the line in Eagle.

Jerry Parsons opened the first hotel at the crossroads. They say it was his sign "Jerry Co." that was the reason for calling the settlement Jericho. At any rate, it was official enough by the time the Welsh arrived that they measured the distance from Jericho to the spot where they built their Bethesda church to be the same distance as the Biblical places.

Jonathan Parsons, brother of Jerry, lived over the line in Eagle. Jonathan married Jane Cross and they built the first frame house in Eagle. Their son Henry went to Jericho school, then Lawrence college and fought in the Civil war.

Up through the years more people came.

Once There Were 2 Stores

Bill Harris kept a blacksmith shop and wagon shop on the northeast corner next to his house. George Henderson helped him make spoke-wheeled wagons.

Across the road was De Wolfe's harness shop with the shop upstairs and his cowstable down below.

Once there were two stores at Jericho kept by Skidmore and Spooner.

Ed Stobber bought out Bill Harris and rebuilt the blacksmith shop of stone. J. H. Pitcher lived across the road on the old Cox claim with his house on the southwest corner. The moss covered stone walls that went around his and John Burden's places were called the "Walls of Jericho."

Prominent people around Jericho in the '90s were the Pitchers, Cummings, Hendersons, Elys, Bradleys, Sheridans, Turners, Smarts, Wests, Burdens, Taylors and Skidmores.

Milk wagons rattled over the rutty road to the Jericho creamery on the north side of the road east of Jericho creek. Willis Stewart made the first butter there. Charles Cruver and Chester Searl were secretaries for this cooperative venture. Each farmer owned stock in the creamery. Later the Pet Milk co. bought them out and used the building as a collecting station for their North Prairie plant.

But the school was the center of activity at Jericho. Sunday school met in the schoolhouse. A non-denominational school, it was taught by Mrs. Turner, Harvey West's father, T. W. West, and others.

Itinerant preachers held revival meetings there, too. One over-stepped his bounds when he shouted to his audience, "Rise you devils and you sons of devils, why don't you repent?" He had to make a public apology before he could preach again.

Oetgens' Hill seemed to be the dividing line for those who went away to church services. Those west of the hill went to North Prairie or Eagle, while those

living east went mostly to Mukwonago's churches. The Robert Turners, however, packed their lunch and went all the way to the Covenanter church in Vernon township.

The Literary society met at the school for programs, plays and spelling matches.

Early schoolteachers at Jericho included Kate Conelly in 1868, Celia Perkins, Lucy Clark, Bettie Andrews, Libby Hill, Kate Burnell, Nellie and Dora Partridge, Maggie Clark, Agnes Wilson, Hans Cummings, Aurel Baker, Henry Brach, Lenna Baker, Ida Pitcher, May Winnie, May Hardaker, (who married Charlie Fintel at Genesee Depot), Ethel and Ed Smart.

School Was a Lively Place

Of course, everybody knows school in those days was a lively place, especially in the winter when the big boys came. On the stormiest days of winter only Roy Henderson and John Skidmore ventured out. Winter was the time for making big snowballs to drop down the chimney. Slates were standard equipment, so when the one and only slate pencil was dropped down a knot hole in the floor, it meant going outside and slithering underneath the building to retrieve it . . . all done intentionally, of course.

Another excuse to get outside was to drop a bug in the drinking water pail.

Letting a frozen ink bottle heat up on the stove with the cork on tight broke the monotony, too, when it exploded and splattered ink all over the ceiling.

A baseball thrown over Platners' fence too often came back with more vehemence than when it went over. Across the road the curly horned Merino rams in Pitchers' pasture were pelted with rocks by the boys in the schoolyard.

For punishment, Ida Pitcher made the culprits kneel on sticks of wood next to the hot stove until their faces were red and hot on both sides.

Bob Turner, Ed Smart, Roy Henderson and Harry West went to school together and all learned to smoke at the same time except Harry.

Adding matches were a morning's activity, while spelling matches involved the whole school in the afternoon. Spelling bees were regular winter neighborhood entertainment when straw-filled sleighloads of folks wrapped in buffalo robes went jingling down the white roads.

Elsie Smart, who'd gone to Jericho school, too, began teaching her first school at 18. She drove her spindle-backed buggy over to Frame school on the present Hy. 83 north of Mukwonago. She kept her horse tied in the school woodshed.

Elsie married Chester Searl and went housekeeping on the Smart homestead with all the conveniences of the big black range with its side reservoir, the woodboxes, kerosene lamps, waterpail and dipper, the Sears Roebuck catalog and all the rest common to folks' everyday living then.

Today life is easier and its farm chores are simpler. Jericho school was one of the few active one-room schools left in Waukesha county as of December, 1958.