

Fond Memories from the One-room Schools

I remember taking a few field trips including to the Commercial and Savings Bank where each student was allowed to hold a \$1,000-dollar bill, to the Frito plant where each was given a bag of fresh Fritos, to the old Ludlow Memorial library, to the Green County Court House where we were given our polio vaccinations. The one trip that stands out to me was going to the Lattice bridge just west of County Highway M on County Highway B the morning after a car ran into the side of the bridge and collapsed it. That memory has stuck with me for more than 60 years.

Sometimes one of the schools would challenge a neighboring school to a baseball game. The entire student body from one school would travel to the other school, probably the one with the better place to play, and we'd play a game before returning back to our own school.

Our school had a large oak tree or two in the back yard and a few lilac bushes surrounded by day lilies nearer the road. Once a year it was our job to rake the entire yard and burn the yard waste. As a reward, we would walk down the road to the banks of Honey Creek where we would roast wieners and marshmallows for lunch. We probably even learned some science while we were near the stream.

Many memories were made on the walk home with my brothers. We walked by a small timber just up the road from the school and might stop to say hello to the neighbor who lived there, especially when he tapped the maple trees in the spring. We also passed by the deserted, dilapidated Woodmen Hall and always wondered what that building had been. It was a scary place, yet was tempting to explore it. When we passed a spring that started along the road we often stopped for a refreshing, cold drink and maybe tasted the water cress growing there.

A Christmas program was held each winter at the school. Students would work for weeks on memorizing lines and practicing the staging. There was a curtain strung across the front part of the school room and benches were hauled in from the wood shed for the audience to sit on. The younger students would recite a short poem while the older students would put on plays. After the program Santa Clause would come from outside with a loud "Ho Ho Ho" and pass out a bag of candy to each of the students.

The highlight of each year was the picnic in May to celebrate the completion of another term. The entire community would turn out for a pot luck lunch followed by reminiscing and a large ball game with students and adults competing on two different teams. I am sure it brought back many memories for those who had attended the school many years before. It probably made them very proud to see that "their" school was still being used and making new memories.

At the end of the year, the school would be locked up and fairly deserted for the next three months. It might be opened for a day or two in August for a couple of mothers who were paid a minimal fee to clean it for the next school year. The lawns were often not mowed during the summer until it was almost time for school to start.

Those who attended earlier than I did would have had a very different experience. In the early years there were often times no well on the grounds so water had to be transported to the school. The students each might have had to drink out of the same dipper as the other students in the school. Electric lights were installed in Enterprise school in the spring of 1946. Those who



This group from the Fairview School in Mt. Pleasant Township was having their Weiner roast at the end of the school year on May 21, 1937. The school was located at 2893 Purintun Road

attended school before that would have had kerosene lamps to light the room. Most of the schools were built with three or four tall windows to let in as much light as possible.

The schools were originally heated by wood that the school board purchased from one of the men in the area to cut and deliver to the school. Enterprise School got an oil burner in 1950 so that the room would be heated a bit at night. Before that someone would have to get to school early to get the fire started so that the room would be warm by the time school started. The oil burner would provide a more consistent heat all day than a wood stove would. At one time they may have burned coal instead of wood.

Our school also purchased a refrigerator in the fall of 1956 so that cartons of milk could be delivered to school saving the parents from having to send a thermos of milk from home. Thermos bottles were quite fragile, so parents were probably thankful for that.

I am not sure when our school got a telephone in the building, but a student would be sent to one of the neighborhood farms if there was a sick child or some other emergency. This obviously could have been a dangerous situation.

A few of the schools had indoor plumbing, so the students could go downstairs to the restroom instead of having to go to the outhouse. They were also fortunate that they didn't have to pump and carry water in the morning. Those schools probably also had a room in the basement where students could play during the winter when they were unable to go outside for recess. Those of us who did not have a basement would stay in the schoolroom for recess and the entire lunch hour on those days.

It seems that all of us who had good teachers have great memories of those days. A sense of community and pride in our country were supported at school as it was at home.