

Schools

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LaBar was promoted to second grade, Kunkle stayed in first grade for the rest of the year.

Kunkle recalled that Hook School had a cupola containing a large bell, which the older students rang to signal the start of the school day.

There weren't any school buses. Students walked to school.

The school had an outside well with a pump, used to fill the water crock which students drank from. The crock now occupies a special place in Kunkle's home.

Because there wasn't any inside running water, the school had two outhouses. "We didn't go out there in the winter unless we really had to," he laughed. "It could get cold!"

Another Lehman Township alumna, Mrs. Dorothy Steele of Meeker, fondly remembers her days at Meeker School and three others in Wyoming and Bradford counties.

Her great-grandfather, Samuel Wilkins, had sold half an acre for the Meeker School to the Lehman Township Board of Education in 1887.

"Like most of its kind, Meeker School was heated by a potbellied stove," Mrs. Steele recalled. "One side of the room froze, while the other side roasted."

Students were required to complete a course of study set up by the Luzerne County Board of Education, with extra subjects added, depending on the teacher's education and the students' interests and abilities.

Mrs. Steele recalled that one of her teachers knew a lot about natural science and regularly took the students on nature study hikes.

Her mother, Edna Harrison, also a teacher in a one-room school, once taught a boy who had learned geometry and advanced mathematics from a previous teacher.

Her brother-in-law, the late Basil Steele, also taught in a one-room school in Ross Township.

"I remember learning the Palmer style handwriting and memorizing phonics charts of the different word families which hung on the walls," she said.

"We wrote our homework on large blackboards on the walls, and also used slates or paper. The inkwells for our pens were mounted in the desks."

While the teacher worked with one grade at the front of the room, the rest of the students worked at their seats.

Well, they were supposed to be working.



ONE OF MANY - This one-room school house still stands in Sweet Valley near the Fish Commission offices at Harris Pond.

She remembered seeing boys bent more on mischief than math dip the ends of girls' braids into their inkwells. Or they would quietly untie girls' dress sashes, then retie them around their chairs, so that the young ladies couldn't stand up to retie when called upon.

Meeker School may have had one of Lehman's first hot lunch programs, Mrs. Steele said. Once each week during the winter, students' mothers would take turns bringing in homemade soup, which simmered on the potbellied stove until lunchtime. The rest of the time, students carried their own lunches.

It wasn't all work, though. During recess, students played baseball, "Statue," jacks or "Haley-over," a ball-tossing game, in warm weather and went sledding or threw snowballs during the winter.

The school year often revolved around the planting seasons, since the children were also needed to help out on their families' farms.

Teachers did more than plan lessons, teach and correct papers. They also fired up the school's potbellied stove and cleaned the school room at the end of the day.

Until the late 1930's, female teachers were required to quit if they married.

Parents often helped by clearing the sidewalks in winter, while students enjoyed cleaning erasers and filling the water crock from the well.

"Our school was modern - we had a crock with a spigot in the bottom," Mrs. Steele said. "We used our own drinking cups, which we kept in our desks."

Often the teachers weren't too much older than their students - all that they needed was an eighth-grade education in order to obtain a teaching certificate, Mrs. Steele said.

Aspiring teachers could attend Pleasant Hill Academy in Sweet Valley for further training. Once they passed oral exams given by the county superintendent of schools, they were considered ready for the classroom.

In order to supplement the teachers' training, the county held regular teachers' institutes, consisting of teachers and county school directors visiting a designated school for demonstration classes by the resident teacher and his or her pupils.

As quaint as Dad's recollections of his one-room school days might seem to today's students in large, computer-equipped schools, one might wonder how equally quaint their reminiscences will be to their children.

Lake accidents spur action

Boating accidents at Harveys Lake have spurred the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to pass stricter regulations on boating while intoxicated and homicide by watercraft.

These accidents also have resulted in prosecutions on these charges:

- 1983: A boat operated by Denis Abromavage ran over another boat, killing four passengers.

- 1985: Harveys Lake resident Kim Krasner drove her boat into a dock and was killed when her head hit the diving board.

- July 27, 1991: Luzerne resident Rich Walter was killed in a water skiing accident when the boat which was towing him, operated by Harveys Lake resident Gregg Hanson, passed close to a dock, and Walter slammed into it.

Hanson was charged with homicide by watercraft, homicide by watercraft while boating under the influence and boating while intoxicated.

- August 3, 1991: Lynnwood resident Marie Riss was arrested for boating while intoxicated and towing a waterskier without having a lookout in the boat. Police said that her blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit.

- September 1, 1991: Six people were treated at nearby hospitals after a speedboat operated by Dallas resident Daniel Cochran rammed the rear of a slower boat operated by William Sickler, ran over top of it and left the scene.

Three passengers in Cochran's boat and three passengers in Sickler's boat were transported to area hospitals for treatment.

Cochran was charged with two counts of reckless and negligent operation of a watercraft, violating the no-wake zone within 100 feet of a dock, failing to stop at a boating accident to identify himself and offer aid and fleeing police pursuit in the accident, which occurred at 11:30 p.m.



SCHOOL DAYS - Complete with outhouse, this renovated one-room school house at the junction of Meeker and Outlet roads once belonged to the Lehman Township Board of Education.



RELICS OF BYGONE DAYS - Franklin Township resident Matt Ostrum shows off an old water crock with a spigot and a wood and wrought-iron school desk seat from a one-room school house. The trailer park where Ostrum lives is on the site of one of Franklin Township's former one-room school houses.

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