

there was a long tail, a single track looping back and forth in close loops for ready jumping, and ending in a short loop. One fox started out to catch the rest of the pupils who were geese. The geese could step over from one track to the other in the circle, or jump from loop to loop in the tail, while the fox had to walk around by the track. But as soon as a goose had carelessly, or by design, allowed himself to be caught, he became a fox. When the foxes had increased to the number of three, they could catch geese readily, and the game speeded up to the inevitable end. We had great fun with this. There was also a line-game that we played in the snow, of the same sort, whose name I have forgotten.

At times in the fall or spring, we would play "Anti-I-Over the School-house" for days, so infatuated with this game would we become. A rubber ball that bounced and was not too hard, was used. At first the sides felt honor bound to throw the ball over the schoolhouse nicely, so that it would probably bound two or three times on the roof, and not be too hard to catch. If someone on the other side caught it, a runner with the ball was chosen, and that side would pour around the two ends of the school in real or mock pursuit of the people on the other side. Only the person with the ball could actually catch those players. Side I tried to escape the invaders, or at least the one they guessed would have the ball, and make their way safely around to the other side of the school. Those caught were now on Side II. The object was to get all the players on one side.

Inevitably as time went on the two sides would be at war. Someone would inadvertently throw the ball a little hard. The other side would have their thrower pitch the ball a little harder so that it would not hit the roof and would be more difficult to catch. The other side would likely respond with a ball thrown a little harder, landing some distance from the schoolhouse. Presently both sides would be utilizing their strongest throwers and the ball might sail far beyond the schoolhouse. The players were dispersed farther and farther out.

Then one side would decide to throw a very nice ball, just clearing the roofpeak and bouncing nicely on the other side. Chances were this ball would not be caught as the players were out afield. Then this side would be honor-bound to throw a nice ball in return and this one was likely to be caught. So the game went. We might continue the game with the sides as they were at play's end, from recess to noon, to recess, to next day. We had great fun at country school. The leadership came from the pupils, the big boys or girls. Occasionally the teacher would be coaxed outdoors, but usually she was busy with records, or preparing for her next round of classes.

Most of the teachers in my early years, had a School Opening of 15 or 20 minutes, in which we would sing a number of songs from the School Knapsack, and finally give the pledge of allegiance to the flag. The School Knapsacks promoted in Michigan at that time, were edited by Henry Pettingill, and had been published in Lansing in 1905.

We sang favorite Stephen Foster songs, "Old Folks at Home", "My Old Kentucky Home", "Old Black Joe." We sang songs that we thought were comic as "King of the Cannibal Islands," (I remember my mother disapproved of this, but to us it was just a fun song) and "Fair Song." We sang "Love's Old Sweet Song" and "A Spanish Cavalier." But particularly we sang Civil War Songs, which were prominent in the Knapsack. We sang with gusto, "Marching Through Georgia." We also sang "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" and the tear-jerker, "Just Before the Battle Mother." Even as a small boy, I wondered why we sang all those civil war songs. But in general I enjoyed the singing and we learned a store of songs that were favorites of our parents and our grandparents. The youth of today do not have that common cultural inheritance with the generations ahead of them.

Teachers in those days usually had good penmanship, and could write a nice hand on the board. On the first day of school, the Schedule was placed on one of the boards. Some of them like Mamie Strange in '96-97 placed good thoughts or quotations on the board, for pupils to memorize, or think upon. As school went on, the pupils placed many arithmetic problems on the board for the teacher to quickly check. And there would be examination questions. On rainy days, when the pupils had to be inside for recess, two-somes might gather at the boards playing one-old-cat. One rainy day game around 1920 was "Skip to My Lou."

I wish I had a copy of some of those school schedules; it is difficult to see now how the teacher got all of those classes in. Reading came first in the morning for the first six grades, and with 5 minutes for each class, reading occupied most of the time up to recess. Then we moved to arithmetic for most of the school. And then geography I believe. In the afternoon we came to language and spelling. Penmanship came in there some place, and orthography some days for a couple of the upper grades. The eighth grade class had agriculture for half the year, and civics for half the year. The small children, through the second grade probably, went home at afternoon recess.

At the appointed time, the teacher might say, "Fourth Grade Reading, rise." We would grab our book and stand. Then "Pass to the front." We would pass quickly to the long front bench reserved for recitation, and the teacher would hold the class. Dismissed, we went to our seats and another grade came forward. What mental gymnastics the teacher had to go through. If we wanted to teacher to help us, we would put our hand up; if we wanted to go to the toilet, we put up our hand with two fingers up. The teacher might get a class to working and pass through the room. She might give a pupil permission to sit with another and get help, or might allow an older pupil to help a younger. Country school was a simple school, which focused on the basics. Any pupil who wanted it to a reasonable degree, would get a good education in the "3 R's" and more.

The school had its simple wonders for the farm boys and girls of the time who knew nothing of television, probably had not seen a movie or travelled far, and who had few books at home. The globe stood for a vast world. The teacher whirled the globe and pointed to where a distant country was found. This pupil was fascinated by the book case with its small library. We greatly loved a big book on Lincoln with some of the stories he told, and the Carpenter books of travel, one for each of the continents, with black and white pictures and text about far-away lands and peoples.

Lilah Miles was our teacher in 1920-21. She was well liked. The salary was now up to \$130 a month, \$1170 for the year; it had risen markedly within a few years. She had 24 pupils, 16 boys and 8 girls, and all eight grades to teach. The textbooks listed that year were as follows: Reading--Graded Literature; Arithmetic--Milne; Geography--Brigham & McFarlane; Spelling--Alexander; Grammar--Montgomery; Penmanship--Palmer; Civil Government--McKone; Agriculture--Man. The First Graded Literature Reader started out with these sentences: "I see. I see. I see a robin." A few years later the young readers would read about Dick and Jane, and their dog Spot. "Run, Spot, run." The library now contained 122 volumes; the schoolhouse was valued at \$1500. District expenses came to \$1,713.76, including \$250 paid for tuition and \$474.46 for general expenses. At the beginning of the year the school had been repapered and refurbished. At Christmas that year, Miss Miles gave me a book, "Boy Scouts in the Everglades", and my brother Earl received a flying machine. Evidently all the pupils that year received a Christmas present from their teacher.

The next year's teacher was Eva Rathbun of Potterville, a graduate of the County Normal. She conceived the idea of a hot lunch program, with the thought that it would be nice for pupils to have a warm item of food with their noon lunch brought from home. I believe we had a hot plate. Two of the bigger pupils were delegated each day to work on the project. Tapioca pudding often was the item cooked. The project was not too successful and was not continued.

In the fall of 1921, our school had a baseball game with the Doane, on their grounds. Our school went down there one afternoon, at recess time I think. We were proud and happy to win by a score of 33 to 11. Obviously the pitching and defense of the schools was not up to the big leagues. A number of parents must have been involved in transportation, but I do not remember those details. On the evening of Nov. 28, 1921, our school held a Halloween Social, though it was a bit late for that theme. They had a big tub of water in which people ducked their faces to bite off an apple; there was a fish pond and a fortune telling booth. It made an event for young and old, something to go in a time when there was no radio, television had not been dreamed of, and few went to the movies.

Miss Rathbun taught 6 months and 13 days to receive \$598.50 and was succeeded by Ruth Bradley, who had a third grade certificate (a high level certificate) and who taught 2 months and 3 days for a salary of \$215. School kept for 170 days that year. Ten days were taken off, for institute two, the County Fair one, Exams two, and sickness five. The schoolboard that year paid high school tuition for 11 graduates, at \$60 apiece. This was a heavy burden financially; I remember that at times the board members worried over how many high school students there would be the next year. Incidentally, the expenditures that year exceeded the income.

Our teacher from 1922 to 1924 was Dorothy Brace. She lived on Saginaw Rd. and drove a car to school. She was black haired, somewhat plump, pleasant, and given to putting on long school programs at Christmas and other times. These programs were much appreciated by the parents. One School Christmas Program had several plays in addition to the recitations and exercises. The plays had been a great deal of work; the strain had been great, and before the end of the program the teacher broke down with feminine tears. But she was reassured that the program had been a great success, and not a failure as she had feared.

For her first year Miss Brace received a salary of \$810. The salary had been cut the previous year following the depression of 1921. For her second year, she received \$900. The District paid tuition on 10 graduates her first year, and 9 the next. Our School continued to be large. Miss Brace had 28 pupils her first year (22 boys and 6 girls), and 39 pupils her second year (29 boys and only 10 girls). For several years now there would be a heavy preponderance of boys in the school. In her second year 22 books were purchased. But with discards and perhaps losses, the library only counted 113 volumes. It was reported that the school had one flag--very poor, and no good maps. In those years we always had a Halloween Party and a Valentine Party. These would be held after the last recess, just before closing hour. On Friday afternoons we might have art; and often we had spelling bees! It was recorded that in 1922-23, the district took these days off: "Thanksgiving, Memorial & Labor Days, 2 days for bad weather, 2 days for Institute, 1 day for County Fair, June 8 Closing day picnic."

The teacher in 1924-25 was Bertha R. Frith. Her salary was \$900. She lived in Nashville, and drove those miles during much of the year. She was weak in discipline and by spring the school was rather out of hand. Pupils began asking in mass to go outdoors to study on nice days, and she was so weak as to allow this. One day Joe Otto and the author climbed the big oak tree back of the woodshed, to get away from the noise and hubbub so that we could study, and this made us locally famous for a time. In the school report that year, we note the question, "Has your district all supplies, dictionary, globe, maps, etc. required by law? NO-No flag, small dictionary, but good maps." The district this year had only 6 high school students, and paid \$360 tuition.

On May 15-16, 1913, the eighth graders of the area had gone to Grand Ledge to write county examinations, administered by Jonas Sawdon. On their successful passing of these examinations, depended their graduation, and promotion to high school. In 1916 the examination site was moved to Oneida Center. By 1917 the seventh and eighth graders both had to write exams near the end of the year in May.¹ In 1924, for the first time the seventh and eighth graders went to Potterville School to write their exams. In 1925, three of the four eighth graders passed successfully. The author's parents were presently informed by the County Commissioner, that their son had the highest marks in the county, and was the valedictorian of the county class. Some of the people decided that education had been taking place in the school after all.

In those years, a graduation program patterned after the high school graduation, was planned and held at the Oneida Grange Hall for all the eighth grade graduates in the township. The hall was decorated nicely. The seventh graders marched in first, forming honor lines on each side of the aisle. Then the eighth grade graduates filed through to their seats.¹ A country school might have only one graduate and at the most only a few. Usually the eight township schools had about 20 graduates. This coming together with increased numbers, added to the enthusiasm and meaningfulness of this program, marking a true milestone in the lives of country children.

The 1925 Eighth Grade Commencement Program was held at the Town Hall on the night of June 10. The eight schools had only 17 eighth grade graduates. Three came from our Strange School, four from Oneida Center, one from the Centennial, two from Canada Settlement, one from the Earl, three from the Watson, one from the Johnson, and two from the Aldrich. Rev. H.A. DeLong gave the Invocation and Benediction; Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Robinson played saxophone duets; Supt. E. H. Chappelle of the Charlotte Schools gave the address; Ronald Brunger gave his short valedictory; Gertrude Pringle, the County School Commissioner presented the diplomas, and the audience sang, "America."

In 1925 the school board hired Herbert Calhoun as teacher. He was the first man teacher in nearly 38 years, but they wanted to restore discipline. Herb was a winsome, bright young man, who was much beloved. He was an excellent teacher and stayed two years. He writes of his memories of his term at South Oneida, and encloses a daily schedule. He reminds us that there was "a difference in teachers, how they arranged the subjects and time allotted to each. If one was fortunate enough to be missing one grade, it helped tremendously in finding an extra few minutes to devote to another group."

¹ Hilah Perry, The Canada Settlement, page 13

of the child; such as "stringing corn", "sewing cards" with bright colored yarns, "chain making" and weaving paper mats. But in those days who knew we were supposed to be creative?

"I was at the Strange (Oneida #3) school from 1925-27. One of the things I remember vividly was my challenging class of eighth graders. The first year I was there, it consisted of four boys, Boyd Burman, Earl Brunger, Joseph Otto, and John Strange. They were all excellent students and kept me mentally alert. The one that gave me the most concern was Joe Otto. Joe was no doubt one of the most particular persons that ever breathed. He would never hand in a paper unless it was in perfect condition. If he made an error of any kind of a blob in any way, he would insist on doing the whole thing over...It hurt his feelings if I said, "Joe, let it go, that's good enough."..

"Perhaps one of the most perplexing and yet fulfilling situations I ever had to handle at Strange School was a beautiful little six year Mexican girl, who didn't know a word of English, but was with us for about four weeks while her family were blocking beets in the neighborhood. Whether she ever gained anything from us is unknown, but we learned so much from her in her quiet and charming manner; for most of us it was our first encounter with one of a different race..

"Recesses and noons were fun times for all of us. Of course there were the usual games that kids play (in the absence of thousands of dollars of playground equipment of today) such as soft ball, volley ball, hide and seek, prisoners goal, and "single tag", which was one of the most popular games at strange.

"It barely seems possible but no longer ago than 1925, we were enjoying air-conditioned out-door bathroom facilities, a galvanized water pail and its long handled dipper, a tin wash basin and a years supply of soap (one bar of Hard Water Castile) and during the year we graduated from the old roller towel to paper ones (a big stride). We most always had plenty of good fresh water, if the pump wasn't frozen or the leathers worn out. It always seemed that the school board delighted in buying coal for the "Old Waterbury System" that came about 4 or 5 chunks to the ton and required a lot of whacking to get it to door size.

"All the little folks at Strange were delightful, but two stand out in my memory, Barbara McMullen and Harry Brunger; Barbara had the loveliest rosy cheeks and a permanent smile, and Harry was clever beyond his years and about as droll as they make them..Mary McMullen was an expert little horseman and would ride up and down the road after school (bareback) and I still marvel how she could control a spirited horse, but she did.

"In the cold months of 1925, we did quite a lot with having something warm for our lunches, sometimes we would have baked potatoes, or some homemade soup and rice pudding; which we made on our oil stove and oven.

.. "I would be remiss if I failed to mention the fine people who gave me support; the glorious patch of purple violets across the road between the church and the cemetery; the mud holes of spring between the Brunger and Zimmerman farms (that Cliff helped me out of on numerous occasions); and one of the most terrible tragedies of all time, the Bath School Explosion which occurred on our last day of school.

"In conclusion, I feel that the rural school of 50 and more years ago, made a tremendous contribution to the well-being of our country. It was a time when you didn't hear that the child couldn't read or write. It was a time when respect and discipline had meaning. It was a time when the school was the life blood of the community and neighbor knew and respected his neighbor and his job. We will all agree that today's youth are better informed; Why?, because our means of communications are so overpowering; because the world is so much smaller than it was 50 years ago; because our scientific prowess is so staggering and because bluster requires less courage than does patience and restraint. While it is true that one cannot go home again or turn back time, it is comforting to know the years past provided a rich and fulfilling life for those who knew it and in some way prepared them for much of the inglorious news that flashes across the media daily." -- We are indeed indebted to Herbert Calhoun for this account of our school in the 1920's, and this evaluation of the oldtime country school.

In 1927 Nellie Burman was hired as teacher, and she taught for a continuous stretch of 7 years. She had graduated from our school in 1920, and is one of the apparently few graduates who have returned to teach here. She proved to be a vigorous and able teacher, and was highly regarded by pupils and parents. By 1928 the school was smaller with only 18 enrolled, 13 boys and 5 girls. The Director now was Simeon R. Cook; Cliff Brunger and Erv Burman remained as Moderator and Treasurer. The District sold bonds for \$300 to pay off a debt. The school was large during Nellie's first year, with enrollment of 32 (22 boys and 10 girls) and then became rather small.

Nellie remembers her salary as starting at \$100 a month in 1927, increasing to \$110 in 1928, and \$120 a month in 1929. But presently with the depression it was cut way down to \$50 a month. She felt "lucky to receive that as many taught for \$35 & \$40." Nellie Burman was presently married to Glenn Ireland. In 1928-29 the enrollment was 16 boys and 9 girls, a total of 25. Thirty books were added to the library that year; 163 volumes were reported. The schoolhouse was now valued at \$2,000; the assessed valuation of the district was then \$217,100. The district paid \$600 tuition for 10 high school pupils.