

MS 37

School Days
Okanagan Centre
Pat Richards
1933-1940

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School Days -- Long Ago at Okanagan Centre.

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The Children of to-day will not enjoy the unique experience of the little one room school house - Grades 1 - 8 with one teacher. This was the Nellie Carter Room of to-day. The main and only door was the one on the South end of the building where the wheel chair ramp is to-day. There was no indoor plumbing or central heat.

The older students often helped the younger ones with their school work and in the winter helped to bundle them up for the long walk home. Buses were unheard of and few people owned cars. The older students tended the stove, when the teacher was busy and if the wood supply ran low on the very cold days one of the boys would go out to the wood shed and fetch more. This did not happen very often as Mrs. Carter would make sure of that.

Mrs Parker taught the basic 3 R's but was a firm believer in educational experience. She dug up a five or six foot strip around the east and south walls of the school, this she divided among the students and we learned to be gardeners!!! Prizes, in the form of books (bought by Mrs. Parker) were awarded at the end of June.

One year she took a holiday in January and went to Mexico. On her return we were treated to many different things, among which were Mexican Jumping Beans (smuggled across the borders). She also brought back a little gizmo with which we made a type of braided rug from pieces of everyones old clothes. This we raffled off and bought sports equipment -softballs, bats, and catchers mitts.

Our Christmas concerts were quite spectacular--in fact word got back to the School Inspector who made it clear that more scholastics and less dramatics were in order.

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Speaking of the school inspector, a visit from him (surprise of course) turned the calmest teachers into nervous wrecks, and the most unruly students into pagans of virtue. Of course the moment he drove away life returned to normal followed by an early dismissal by an exhausted teacher.

One of the more scary events of our rural school life was the visit of the school doctor armed with his black bag full of torture equipment or so we thought. His name was Dr. Ootmar, I believe he was Dutch. He had a long beard and fairly long hair with a bald spot on top. He was accompanied by a Health Nurse, Miss Grinden, who wore a very tight blue uniform. By the time they left most of the little ones were crying and the older ones rubbing their arms from one kind of immunization or other.

One memory which brings back a chuckle was of Mr. Parker (Gurden) bringing his wife to school in a wheelbarrow and taking her home after school. This was quite a feat as their home was at the top of 6th Ave. I believe she sprained her ankle or had gout.

Mrs. Parker was the only teacher, except for the occasional spare, who taught the seven years I was there. I don't believe any were more colorful than her.

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