

BACK IN TIME

First year of school

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

The excitement in 1932 of my first day in a one-room schoolhouse is more memorable than on any other school day. I hardly slept the night before, just anticipating my being there in a new dress that my mother had made, my brand new shoes, and a colorful lidded lunch pail.

To help my shyness at that time, I was so glad to have my sister, Gladys, going along with me, even though she was much older and in the eighth grade. Also, my first cousin, Doug McKee, and my second cousin, Marcene McKee, would be joining me in the first grade.

I already knew the wonderful teacher, Miss Jeannette Gore, because she boarded at my grandparents' home. She was so very well liked and became a close friend of our family. Thus I headed off on the mile-long walk to school with great anticipation of

all the fun I would have on my first day at McKee School.

Miss Gore greeted everyone and assigned seats. There was a primary table about three feet by six feet and maybe 20 inches high with six small chairs. (In later years I was given one of these chairs that my children and others enjoyed using.)

We had a first-grade reader and workbooks with about 50 pages, in which we copied the alphabet, made words, and wrote numbers. To me, the best part of the book was coloring the pictures; sometimes we were told what colors to use, and other times we could create some of our own colorings. Miss Gore made a weekly inspection of our assignments, and we usually got As.

Recess was the best, but the playground did lack for equipment, except



McKee School.

for a large slide, which I did not play on due to my fear of heights. Also, the older boys would wipe it with wax paper, always in good supply from our sandwich wrappers, which made for an extremely fast ride. "Anti-Over" was a favorite game with the older boys. This game consisted of two teams, one on each side of the school, throwing the ball back and forth over the roof. If you caught the ball, you got to throw it back over. The only other rule was to not break a window in the school building. To the best of my knowledge all windows remained unbroken.

And, of course, where would we be without the game of baseball? Our school lacked enough older students for a full team, so, reluctantly, some of us younger children were asked to fill in. One year we were taken to the Uniontown School to play a game, and I was scared to death that a ball would come my way! I don't recall who won, but I do remember the teacher at Uniontown was Miss Inlow and ours was Mrs. Bertha Haskins. Priorities!

At Thanksgiving time, Miss Gore must have contacted our mothers about making some costumes in which

to celebrate the season. We were dressed as Indians and pilgrims. I remember the scratchy gunnysack clothing we wore as the Indians, but I was very proud of the hand-painted designs and the turkey feather on our headbands. It is amazing to still have a couple of pictures of us in our costumes.

It seemed as though that first year of school went faster than any other, and then I was looking forward to summer vacation. On that last day of school, I was bragging to Marcene that my birthday was June 22 and after lunch on that day I was going to have a big birthday party with a delicious birthday cake for all to enjoy. Well, much to my regret, she remembered that date and her mother brought her to our house for the celebration. I was shocked and so embarrassed, and my mother was totally flabbergasted. The truth was that no party had been planned, not even a cake baked because the wood cookstove made the house too hot in June. Lois, Marcene's mother, and my mother actually had a nice visit, but I never really got over that embarrassment!

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Costumed students. Front row: Albert Anderson, unknown, Carmelita Lewis, unknown, Rosella Offenbacher, Clara Faye McKee, Evelyn Byrne. Back row: Gladys Byrne, Frances Port (?), Vionetta Rupretch, Lester Anderson, George Taylor (?), Victor Anderson (?). Anyone know the "unknown" students or can confirm the (?) students? Let us know!