

BACK IN TIME

Workday at Beaver Creek School

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

When I look at the wonderful old photographs that I have collected over the years, I find myself reminiscing about the people and places captured in those pictures. One such photo transports me back to one of my favorite places, the Beaver Creek School, and memories of the friends and family gathered there.

This 1930 photo from Lee Port Jr. was taken in back of the newer Beaver Creek School just before school started in September. I think everyone brought a lunch, or it could have been a potluck. My father, John Byrne, is there along with cousins, uncles, and my sister Gladys, who is standing in the middle of the picture.

As you can see, the workday was well attended for that small school. The women swept and mopped the floors, cleaned windows inside and out. The desks were cleaned, and the seats were checked underneath for any hidden chewing gum. Some students were privileged to have that luxury (gum) while others made due with “pitch gum” found on pine trees. Still, both could be found stuck to the furniture and required some elbow grease to remove.

When the school building was spick-and-span, the cleaning chores moved to the outside privies. The boys’ was behind the woodshed to the far left, and the girls’ was at the far right behind a large pine tree. A broom with a bucket of soapy water took care of the seats,

and then a sack of lime was held over the hole to drop in about one quarter of its contents for sanitation. I think there were old catalogs instead of toilet paper. It was so much cheaper, and kids were used to the catalog bit.

The men either cut wood there



Workday at Beaver Creek School. Front row, left to right: My dad John Byrne, my cousin Virgil O'Brien (visiting from Pinole, CA), Floyd Rippey, Albert Anderson (boy), Cary Culy, and Edward Finley. Second row: Wesley Ritchey(?), my uncle Floyd McKee, unknown, my aunt Eva McKee with son Richard, my sister Gladys Byrne (who recently passed away at age 97), and Lester Anderson. Back row: Unknown, unknown, unknown, unknown, Mamie Winningham. Behind fence: unknown, Maude Pool, George Peck, unknown, Louis Straube.

or brought some for the old potbelly heating stove. It took a lot to keep the school warm during the winter because there was no insulation in the building. The woodshed was at the right of the photo, and I remember it being filled with wood. The children were not allowed to play in there, but the older boys could carry wood in for the stove. They seemed to like that task, even when the snow was often a foot or two deep. I remember how the teacher would let us sit near the stove during the winter when we got too cold for comfort at our desks.

One of the other things I remember is the small room inside the back door on the south side of the building where there was a coat closet for the boys and drinking water was piped in from a nearby spring to a faucet and sink. That was such a luxury for those who did not have running water in their homes.

It was sad when, after 47 years, there were not enough students for the school to continue operating; it closed in 1945. A few students left to attend Uniontown School, and then consolidation with Ruch took place in the summer of 1946.

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For more information about the Beaver Creek School District, see the fall 2015 Applegater online at www.applegater.org.