

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

by Aunt Isabel (Anne Germano McKeeby) (2006)

Some weeks ago, my granddaughter Amy asked me to write about my early life for her daughter Lily and their little girl's club.

Thought a few of you might be interested. So with a few changes, here are the memories of a very old lady.

I started school in 1914 in the church we attended because the schoolhouse being built wasn't quite finished. I remember having a sand table to play in and little red chairs to sit in on.

The school building was finished in January. We thought it was lovely. It was red brick with two big rooms separated by a wide hall where we hung our wraps. There was also a large auditorium where we played games, did exercises and had music lessons, because the piano was in there. A music teacher came once a week to let us sing and learn new songs.

We carried our lunches in special made lunch boxes and weather permitting, sat outside to enjoy. We drank water from a tin cup from a pump outside. When nature called we used outside toilets, one for girls and one for boys. It wasn't so nice in the winter!

My favorite teacher was my sister Elnora who taught me in the second and third grades. Though usually I walked to and from school, I'd sometimes stay after school to help her clean the blackboards and erasers, put things in order, and rode home with her in a horse drawn buggy. She kept them across the street with her future in-laws.

My favorite subject was reading because I liked the stories. My least favorite was arithmetic, although when I went to high school, I liked Algebra and Geometry because they were like solving puzzles.

I loved reading "The Little Colonel" series about a little Kentucky girl. The author, Annie F. Bacon was from our home town and one summer she was to speak at a reunion. I wanted to hear her and looked forward to it. But when she came, I had whooping cough! I was so disappointed- of course I couldn't go.

At recess we played ball or "Rabbit"; if the one who was "it" hit you with the ball, you became a rabbit and were out. There was a grove of trees in back of the school house where we enjoyed playing "Witch". If the witch caught you, you "turned to stone" and had to stand by a tree until rescued by another player touching you. Of course that player ran the risk of being caught too.

In the winter if there was enough snow on the ground, my Dad would take me and my sisters and the neighbor kids to school in a horse drawn sleigh. We loved that!

At recess, we chose up sides and each side built a fort of snow balls. It was fun trying to knock each other's fort down by throwing snowballs at it.

There were only seven in my class all through the eight grades: four boys and three girls, until we went to the big Central High School in Evansville.

We country kids had to take a county-wide exam in order to go to high school. Of course we were scared, but Miss Lida, our teacher in grades 6 through 8, had prepared us well and we all passed beautifully.

I remember the long walk from our house, up the lane, around the road past the Hornby's and the Rigg's to the trolley that took us to town. Then of course we had to take the same route home. I guess it was good exercise!

We had good times and sad times. One very sad time was when one of the girls in our class, Ruth Webb, was killed by lightning. She had gotten off the trolley and found it storming. She ran to a tree for protection, but it was struck by lightning and she was instantly killed. I remember Ruth Hornby and I and her two classmates spent the night at her parents' home during the "wake". That was my first close-up encounter with death.

I guess the good times were almost all the time. We laughed and played. We enjoyed each other's company. I wish all children could have as good a time growing up as I had. Sadly that's not true!

Isabel