

ISABEL ANNE McKEEBY (2003)

My niece, Lois France with her friend Pat, was here a few days ago. Among the things she said was that you wanted to hear (*many of us want to hear*) from some of us “old timers” about our memories of early teachers, classmates etc. So I’ll comply.

As I started school in 1914, age 6 (ooh – along time ago!) the new school (*McCutchanville School*) wasn’t quite finished, so we met in the church. I remember the sand table and the little red chairs. In January the school house was completed and we moved in.

It consisted of two class rooms divided by a hall, and a large auditorium used for all kinds of programs and community meetings. Underneath was the furnace and a large recreation room where we played games and practiced drills.

My first grade teacher was Miss Margaret McCutchan whose hands were always fluttering, whether from habit or from Parkinson I don’t know. The students with me were Ruth Hornby, Ruth Webb (killed by lightning in the 9th grade) Sam Moffett, Clarence Cooksey, Delbert Deisinger and Clarence Seib. The last three came from a village down by the church (I don’t remember its name). They rode in the “school bus” – a horse drawn wagon with seats running along the sides. Occasionally I rode that bus to visit overnight my sister Mayme and husband Robert Henry who lived on a farm down there.

We walked to school joined sometimes by Ruth and Geneva Hornby. Other kids who Joined less often were Martha and Oscar Riggs and Billy and Olivia Effinger because I guess they lived farther away.

My 3rd and 4th grade teacher was my sister Elnora Swope. Her future mother in-law was the janitor and kept the rooms clean. I often stayed after school to dust the erasers and clean the black boards. Some time during those grades we were joined by Isabelle Schlensker and another Isabelle. One thing remaining in my mind of the 3rd grade was having to “play see-saw” holding hands with the boy across the aisle. “Zeke” was a tall gangly boy who smelled like he came fresh from the smelliest part of a barn! I hated it! In spite of that

Elnora was a good teacher and got us ready for the next grade.

We had no indoor plumbing or running water. Two outdoor out houses, one for girls and one for boys, met our needs, even in winter when we ran back and forth. Water came from a pump with a tin cup hanging on the side. We didn’t worry much about sanitation!

The games we played were base ball, rabbit, hidden go seek or board, and in the wooded area behind the school “witch”. If you were caught you became a witch and stayed that way until rescued, hopefully by a favorite boy friend!

Miss Florence Ensle came once a week to teach us songs and drills. The drills we performed later for parents at PTA etc. We had all kinds of drills – flag, dumb bells, wands (broom handles!). Being the shortest kid in the class I was always stuck at the head of the line. If I made a mistake, so did everyone who copied me.

In 1918 the terrible flue epidemic hit us. The stage of the auditorium was set up with temporary Beds. I remember lying in one with chills and fever. I just couldn’t get warm! The one casualty was Willis Moffett. I believe he was older than me.

Miss Lida Henry was our teacher through grades 5 – 8. She was an excellent teacher and prepared us for the dreaded 8th grade county exam. All the community gossiped about her and “boy friend” Asa coots. It was rumored they’d marry when both their parents died, but they didn’t. She finally took him in to care for when he was old and unable to care for himself.

During those years a boy, Clay Stinson, joined one of the classes. He was always getting into trouble. Older kids I remember were Alice and Kathryn Swope, Geneva and Lucille Hornby and Clifford - ?-.

To go to high school we had to take a “traction” – an electric car that ran from Princeton (or above) to Evansville. Again we had to walk a long way to catch it and a long way back. I often waited for Dad in his County Assessors office in the Court House to ride home with him – a long wait in a cigar smelling office!

Four long years in Central High School for a shy country girl -! It was terrifying – it was fun!

Isabel Anne Swope McKeeby