



EVERYONE WAS THERE — In 1937, this group of youngsters comprised the entire student body of St. Mary's, from the first grade through the twelfth grade. Preparation for this picture

meant each hair in place, the best finery you owned and a good scrubbing, even behind the ears. The school, itself, was put in readiness, with every shade evenly pulled.

'School days, school days, dear old golden rule days'

"School days, school days, dear old golden rule days, reading and writing and 'rithmetic, taught to the tune of a hickory stick,..."

The familiar old tune immediately brings to mind the vision of an old maid with a sagging face twisting the ear of a young boy who just dipped a little

girl's pigtail in the ink well. The schoolhouse in which they sit is red with one room and huge blackboards on which the alphabet is perfectly

printed.

Such visions are, for the most part, accurate. As Otsego County grew in size and population, new schools had to be built to meet the requirement of the law which stated any area with 50 or more residents must provide schooling for their children.

The first school to serve the rapidly-growing Gaylord community was in a building located on Main and Indiana Streets where the First National Bank of Gaylord recently opened. The school, which also served as a community activities building, went from grades one through 10, and Miss Fostoria Towle was one of the three teachers employed. The building was later purchased by some men and moved across the street to be used as the Knoke potato warehouse.

An entire block of Gaylord was purchased in 1882 from George and Addie Smith on which a new \$8,000 school was built. The red brick schoolhouse, which opened its doors to students in grades one through 12 in 1891, featured electricity, drinking fountains and two dining areas. The school was located at the present site of the Community Center tennis courts and in 1904 an addition doubled its size.

MRS. ZELLA MOORHEAD, of Elmira, a former rural school teacher strikes down the

belief that all school teachers were old maids born with bad temperments.

Mrs. Moorhead began her teaching career in 1914 and qualified as a teacher by finishing eighth grade and then taking a 6-week course in teaching and passing a state examination. She taught in several schools throughout the county including Van Tyle, Salling, Sparr, Polaski, Logan and the Red School. Her largest class was in Polaski school where she taught the basics to 53 students. The average class had between 15 and 30 pupils.

She described the typical school house as a one room frame building with a pot belly stove in either the center or back of the room. Desks, most of them individual with a few double, were fastened to the floor and children were seated according to height with the shortest in front and the tallest in back. In front of the teacher's desk was a large recitation bench where each class (grade) would come to review their work without disturbing the others.

Mrs. Moorhead said that teaching school back in "the-good old days" was as fulltime a job as you could get. "I had to prepare lesson for each of the 8 classes in the evening and also check over their work. A great disadvantage to the one-room, one teacher arrangement was that

there was never time to go over lessons and check them in the class, there was always another class waiting."

The students attended school 5 days a week, from 9 a.m. til 4 p.m. with a 15-minute recess in the morning and afternoon. Mrs. Moorhead said that for the younger students, in grades 4 and below, teachers attempted to finish their lessons before lunch so they could be dismissed and had enough time to walk home together.

THE GREATEST DIFFERENCE Mrs. Moorhead cited between the old one room red school houses and the complex structures of today is the fantastic variety in curriculum offered by present-day schools. Besides instructing the 3 basic R's during her career, she also taught spelling, penmanship, geography, history and hygiene. Today, said Mrs. Moorhead, there is so much variety, with classes ranging from art and dancing to psychology and calculus.

When she taught in rural schools, continued Mrs. Moorhead, rigid examinations were given to the eighth grade students by the county commissioners. In order to meet graduation requirements or advance to high school, the student had to pass the

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