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Memories - The First Mill Creek School

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MEMORIES

The First Mill Creek School
A Composite Recollection by Former Students Living in Bulloch County

Iris Kingery Akins  Bertis Heath Fordham
John Wesley Chester  Edna Akins Hotchkiss
J.R. Chester  Roscoe Laircey
Mary Lee Donaldson  Herman Marsh
                Hendrix Deal  Nanny Ackerman Wynn
John Paul Ellis

Memories gathered by Mary Sue DeLoach Smith in personal and telephone interviews July 8-16, 1999

Mill Creek Schools: 1914 and 1999
An Old Stream Connects Them
Bulloch County had 93 public schools in 1914, according to a survey by M.L. Duggan, state rural school agent. Schools were segregated in 1914. Fifty-seven were all-white and 36 were all-black. Duggan inspected all the schools and, in a report published in 1915, said it required seven full weeks to visit all the schools in the county, even with the constant use of the automobile of local superintendent of schools B.R. Olliff. The school system's aim was "To make every school in Bulloch County as good as the best school in Bulloch County."

The survey suggested consolidation of some of the county schools. "Since it is almost impossible for a one-teacher school with all the common-school grades to be an efficient school, the matter of consolidation deserves serious consideration. There are a few places in Bulloch County where the consolidation of several schools could be effected without inconvenience and to the very great advantage of all concerned."


Mabry, Kemp. Spirit of a People: Celebrating 200 Years of Bulloch County History. 1796-1996.

SEE INVITATION BELOW

Today the site of the first Mill Creek School is a Coastal Bermuda pasture owned by John Paul Ellis, a former student. Mill Creek School produced some of Bulloch County's finest citizens. We offer best wishes for the new Mill Creek Elementary School.

New MILL CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
239 BEASLEY ROAD AT HIGHWAY 24
phone 764-5979, fax 764-3842
DEDICATION: Sunday, Sept. 12, 1999--2:00 P.M.
PUBLIC INVITED
Located near Upper Mill Creek Church where R. W. Skinner now lives. Picture belongs to Mrs. Nezzie Akins Allen and Mrs. Evelyn Akins Allen identified ones in group.


photo from Statesboro Herald 1973

MEMORIES OF THE FIRST MILL CREEK SCHOOL

The school was located between Mill Creek bridge and Upper Mill Creek Primitive Baptist Church on Highway 25, north of Hopeulikit. It was included in the State Education Survey by M.L. Duggan in 1914 and published in 1915. The school was unpainted then but a picture taken in 1919 shows a painted building.

One teacher taught upper grades in the larger classroom. Another teacher taught lower grades in a smaller room. On one side of the building was a cloakroom where students kept their lunch buckets, jackets and personal syrup bottles. There was a porch on the front.

All former students recalled walking two or more miles to and from school. One walked to school with Miss Leila Wilson and Miss Leila White who boarded with Hannah and Adam Woodcock. In winter, “The walk was cold and when it was extremely cold or raining, we went by horse and buggy... not much warmer. There was a pot bellied stove to warm by at school.”

BOX SUPPERS

All former students recalled box suppers held “to make up money for the school.” One said, “Election time was a good time to hold them because politicians would come and pay good money for the boxes.”

Girls old enough to have boyfriends prepared attractive boxes with dinner inside. The boxes were auctioned to the highest bidder who then ate with the girl who prepared it. A boy tried to buy his girlfriend’s box. “A girl would make a box from cardboard and cover it with crepe paper and flowers. A special one I remember I made was red and heart-shaped. It was so pretty,” a former student recalled.
RECESS AND GAMES

Recess began when the teacher rang the handheld school bell. "We liked to hear that bell ring!" One recess was mid-morning and the other was mid-afternoon.

GAMES

Jump rope—older boys cut bamboo vines to use for jump ropes.
Slide boards—"a wide board that lay flat on the ground. It was fun to slide your foot out and travel along on the board."
Baseball—made from "rubber rings from Mason jars, balled up and yarn from old socks wrapped around it.
Town ball—sometimes old automobile tires were cut up and used for the center of the ball. Town ball was played with a stick shaped like a paddle.
Flying Jenny—located on school grounds, "a piece of timber fixed onto a stump with a big screw. Two people could use it as a see saw or like a merry-go-round----fast!" Not everyone tried it. One person remembered a swing across from the school. All remembered that boys and girls played well together.

LUNCHTIME

"Lunchtime was about 30 minutes. We usually ate outside on the porch. In 1927-28 one student brought lunch in a brown paper bag but most students brought lunch in a half gallon tin bucket every day. I’d take baked sweet potatoes, ham and biscuits or egg pie filling my Mama made in teacake pans.” One schoolgirl’s lunch bucket was beaten flat by hitting across a certain boy’s head as they walked from Moore Road to school!”

“School supplies were paper and pencil only. Parents bought the schoolbooks. “It was Depression time—rough times, poor days, dirt road, wooden bridges. We had no money, yet we had a good time. We had only homemade things then.”

“A girl usually wore a bloomer suit. This had a dress part that went to the knees, bloomers with elastic, and a sailor collar. One of my favorites Mama made with rickrack around the collar with a star. If a girl didn’t have a bloomer suit, she just wore any long skirt.”

DISCIPLINE

“Children knew to mind the teacher. Our parents wouldn’t take up for us if we were punished by the teacher. They’d send us right back to school and support the teacher.”

“If someone did something he/she shouldn’t, the teacher would draw a ring on the blackboard and the student who misbehaved would stand with his/her nose in the ring. Or, one might have to stand on one foot on the stage in the big room.”

Students had to get switches from the woods. These stood in the corner as a constant reminder to us.” “The teacher would ‘tear ‘em up in front of the class.” One man recalled he had to stand in the corner in the cloak room once for punishment. That was the only time he remembers being punished at Mill Creek School.

Two boys went swimming in the baptism hole (pond) near the church during the school day. They were punished. One had a hand paddling. Another was sure he had a traditional paddling.
Miscellaneous

A fire once occurred at school during class time. According to one student who was in the 5th grade approximately, the teacher climbed up with her high heels on and tried to put it out. Eventually, some older students helped to extinguish the fire. Asked if he remembered any fears that school children had during their school days, he could not recall any. All 10 former students reported that there was a closet or outhouse for the girls but none for the boys who had to go into the woods.

One student recalled using lamps that provided light for doing schoolwork. Yet, another student did not remember using lamps at all at Mill Creek School. One gentleman remembered a Thanksgiving program. The students presented it for their parents and the community.

School Closings

All of the students remember the annual school closings held the last day of school. The students presented a program for their parents and the community, received their report cards, and found out if they had been promoted to the next grade. “On the last day there would be a dinner on the grounds and my mother would take a trunk loaded with food for the day.” One former student stated that school closings were his favorite aspect of attending Mill Creek!

“Oh, overall, I liked it all at Mill Creek School.” Another person replied, “Children seemed to think a lot of their teachers”. Another person remarked, “We had some of the best teachers you’ve ever seen!”

Final Closing. Mill Creek School closed in the Spring of 1928 as the consolidation movement began in Bulloch County. After that time students in the area attended either Middleground or Portal Schools.

These are the teachers remembered in the interviews:

Miss Ruby Akins  Miss Audrey Storey
Miss Eula Brannen  Miss Leila White
Miss Alice Clark  Miss Leila Wilson
Miss Ruby Deal  Mr. Pye Womack (became Bulloch County Superintendent)
Miss Thea Groover  Miss Leila Wilson
Miss Lily McQuarter  Mr. Will Womack
Miss Seals (Sears)  Miss Bernice Wynn
Miss Mattie Sowell  Miss Jessie Wynn