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LILLIAN SCHOOL

EDUCATION IN LILLIAN SCHOOLS

Many of our ancestors attended private school in the early day of the Lillian Community. One of these private schools was on the Penton Homestead. Mr. Penton obtained the land under the Homestead Act during the Benjamin Harrison administration in 1816. Early settlers on this land established a private school. One of the teachers was Miss Mattie Beal, mother of Mrs. Tom Gilley. Mrs. Gilley still has the little hand bell used at this school.

As the years brought more settlers more schools were established. Some were in homes, other in small one room buildings which were set up on high blocks so they offered shelter to pigs and an occasional visiting bear.

A private school on the Donaldson place was the first public school. Mr. Hannah was the teacher. Mr. Mosley also taught there. The school was near the present H. Burtell farm. Other schools were the Church Branch school where the John Maddens now live. Mr. H. W. Gilley was the trustee. The Villar school which is now the Sycamore Inn and the Lillian School, which was back of the present home of Mrs. E. Hodges were also established about this time.

Around 1920 all of these small schools were consolidated into the present Lillian Elementary school. It offered nine grades and had two teachers. The Junior grades were later consolidated with Elberta Junior High School to offer students more advantages. A list of teachers and trustees will be found at the end of this article.

In 1944 Mrs. Bonnie Austin became principal with Miss Vera_____ as assistant.

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There was no Cafeteria and the winter was extremely cold. Sometimes it was still 40 degrees at noon inside the school rooms. To help warm the children up the teachers made hot chocolate or hot soup on an old pot-bellied stove. The children furnished their own cups and plates. They were stored in an apple box in the clerk room. The vegetables, soup stock and milk was brought in by the children. Mrs. Johnson happened by at one of these luncheons and suggested a cafeteria.

In 1946 the Cafeteria was started. The P.T.A. worked on it as a project, and it is now one of the modern Cafeteria's with sanitary facilities.

The school has had several noted visitors. One of these was Dr. Glen Slough of the United States Department of science. The day Mr. Tharp and Mrs. Hayes brought Dr. Blough to the school the children were busy trying to warm a hundred baby chicks over the stove while one group of children were scouting for an electric brooder. Dr. Blough helped the children set up plans for raising the chicks; but the "best laid plans of mice and men often gang astray." The chickens turned cannibalistic an ate each others feathers. They had to be sold. The netted a profit of five dollars and fifty cents which was used to buy Library books.

Our school was also noted for its bear story. The bear stole ten loaves of bread one morning and disappeared in the swamp back of the school. The forest ranger, Mr. Hurst, tracked him but could not catch up with him. Dr. Blough suggested the children write their story for the Weekly Reader. They did and the story was printed. Letters come to the school from near and far. The following poem was used in a program and tells the explicit story of the bear adventure.

THE LILLIAN BEAR

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Have you heard the tale of the Lillian Bear?
That started our school on an adventure so rare.
A Bear that stole ten loaves of bread
And had all of us wishing that critter was dead.

He stole our bread and left his track;
But nobody saw him with the pack on his back.
We identified his tracks from our Science book.
And called Mr. Hurst to take a look.

Down over the hill and right through the fence
Tracking that Bear was really no nonsense.
Down in the lane, Mr. Hurst said he Found,
Where the bear ate our bread and threw the papers on the ground.

We told our story to Dr. Blough and Mrs. Hayes;
Oh! What a ruckus our story did raise.
"Write your story to the Weekly Reader" they said;
Now all of us wishes that fool bear was daid.

We sent in that story of an adventuresome bear
Our teachers are now loosing most of their hair.
The Weekly Reader printed it far and wide;
The letters started coming from every side.

Georgraphy –English—we learned you bet.
Letters from Sue, Dorothy, Jack and Wyoming's Joanette;
Washington, Texas, Mass. and New York—'nuff said.
I tell you folks, all of us wishes that bear was dead.

The Lillian School has a very active P.T. A. A bus transports the children to the school and takes the high school students to Elberta and Foley. It has one of the first Elementary Student Councils that was organized in the County.

The School has been instrumental in getting a Home Demonstration Club, and a 4-H Club for the boys and girls. It also was responsible for the first Protestant Church in the Community. The Church grew out of the Friday Afternoon Bible Story Hour. Since 1940 the Church has sent four fine young men into the ministerial field.

The Mothers have excellent opportunities for getting acquainted with the teachers through Cafeteria projects such as canning sour and apple sauce or planning for school programs.

The school program is designed to build solid citizens for the community of tomorrow through a rich program of experience. The pupils, teachers and parents express their feelings about the school in the school poem.

LILLIAN SCHOOL

Lillian School is a wonderful place. (can't read the rest of the passage)

We cannot record the history of our school without paying tribute to Mr. S. M. Tharp, our County Superintendent of Education. He is the man that made these things possible through his co-operation with the patrons, trustees, and teachers of the school.

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1. Lillian School district formed 8/20/09 - two acres of land donated by Lillian Turpentine Co. Located about 3/4 mile northeast of present site.

2. Board exchanges old site of two acres for present site of five acres.

3. Board acquires additional site of two and one-half acres.

4. Board furnishes material and community furnishes labor to construct restrooms, 2/26/54.

5. Example of numerous entries before and after this time. 9/2/55.

6. Lillian School closed 9/15/67

7. Building use granted to several organizations none of which made much use of it or controlled vandalism also see 9/8/77.

8. The Board considers moving the Lillian School Building.

9. Some community members oppose the move.

10. The Board decides to move the building.

11. The sale of timber.

12. The Board's attorney, Norborne Stone, gave his opinion that the title to the five acre portion of the site on which the building was located reverted to the original owners when the school was abandoned. The two and one-half acre portion did not.

Note: It has been ruled by the courts that a Board of Education has a "reasonable" time in which to move a building after the school is abandoned before the site reverts. In the case of Lillian the time was thirteen years.