



Glen Elder, KS -- Heritage & History

~ Memoir Lane ~

Early School Days

-- by Phyllis Porter

It's 7° at 7 o'clock this morning as I gaze out over the landscape and see the school bus drive by. It brings back memories of my school days attending a Rose Valley, a one-room school and later teaching in the same school.

There were no school buses then. And I think now how scared our mother must have been to bundle me and my brothers, Gerald and Robert, up in our coats, hats, mittens and whatever else she could get on us while thinking about the mile and a half walk we had ahead us. Then, she'd get us out the door, sending us off to school in plenty of time, hoping that we would get there before the school bell rang at 9 o'clock. It was unheard of to be hauled to school unless the snow was so deep one couldn't struggle through it. Only then, dad might hitch up the team of horses to the wagon and take us—but those days were rare.

Our teacher, Thelma Rominger, had to have gotten to the schoolhouse by 6:30 or 7 a.m., in order to build a fire in the big, potbellied stove to get the room warmed before we students arrived half frozen. Boy, that fire really felt good! Some of my classmates were Maribell and Marge Anderson, Benice Timbers, Bernita Eberle, Roy Dale Timbers and George Rarick

Now, it is important to know that this same teacher had all eight grades to teach. And, she was also the custodian, doctor, disciplinarian, playground supervisor, counselor and program director. I remember that we had some really great Christmas programs that consisted of more than just singing—all of this on a monthly teacher's salary of maybe \$75.

I also attended the rural and very small Athens High School from 1940 through 1943. Even then, over 60 years ago, consolidation was an issue for the very same reasons as today, including the number of attending students and operating costs. Though Athens was somewhat limited on curriculum, for example psychology was not offered along with some other classes offered at larger schools, many students graduated to go on to lead very prestigious lives as attorneys and doctors. And there were others, too. Clifford Dean became a college professor, Jim Kennedy, a minister, Gail Applebee a school superintendent, Gerald Dean, a military officer, and many successful farmers.

Sports were also enjoyed but were limited because of student numbers. So, our school played 6-man football in a cow pasture, fixed up with goal posts. The players all hoped the cows wouldn't graze in that area the night before. If they did, it meant players had to be really careful before falling to the ground!

Basketball was played on the hard packed dirt schoolyard. The "floor" was marked off and goals placed at each end. So, if it rained, practice had to be canceled but, if it snowed, the boys scooped off the playing area and went at it. They had a lot of desire. Needless to say, there were no home basketball games played at Athens. Instead we used the gyms at either Glen Elder, Ionia or Jewell. Through all of this Athens High School had some great teams and even won some state championship trophies in the 1930s!

Athens School closed in the spring of 1943—my junior year. So, for my senior year, I attended Glen Elder High School. Making this change was hard as there were so many more students. But I adjusted, was able to take classes that were not available before and graduated with a normal-training certificate which allowed me to become a one-room school teacher! I taught in the very school that I attended when I was a little girl, Rose Valley and then later at Ionia grade school.

Now, my grandchildren listen to these stories in disbelief and chuckle. No, we really didn't have luxuries like school buses back in those days, but then we didn't have many of the problems associated with the schools of today.