

Mt. Pleasant School



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by Julie Barnhart
From A Piece of the Past

A small piece of Mt. Pleasant's history was lost in the early 1950's. What would you do if a piece of your family's past was lost forever? Most likely you would dig around to find the pieces of the puzzle and attempt to put them together.

The puzzle I was trying to solve was one about Mt. Pleasant School, which was located about 10 miles east of Lebanon. Most of my mother's family members attended it, but the only records that I could find were those that her father had given her. Linn County history books have no record of this quaint little place. Only those who attended it could tell me anything, but no one knew when it was built. Somehow, this school's history was locked in its past, never to be heard from again. --

The building itself was a small one-room meeting place for those who attended it. It was heated by a small pot-bellied black stove, which the students also used to cook on when it was too cold to return home for lunch. The only decorations were a picture of George Washington and a green chalkboard from which the pupils learned their lessons.

Classes began each year in mid-September and ended in early May. The students were to arrive by 9 am each morning and were dismissed around 3:30 or 4:00 pm. They learned arithmetic, reading, English, geography, history, civics (government), spelling, writing, health, and language.

Compared to today's class size, Mt. Pleasant School was miniscule. During 1933-1937, the largest class had 23 students and the smallest had only 10. These figures were taken at the beginning of the year, so they do not count all of the families that moved away. Shirley Conser, a student during the 1930's, told me about his school days. He used to ride his pony to school each day. The pony remained in the pasture adjacent to the school until it was time to return home each day. His teacher, Mr. David Hawk, was very friendly and put his all into his job. During recess he taught students how to tie fishing lines that were strong enough to reel in the big ones. He resided in a cabin that would now be at the end of Conser Hill Drive. One of the interesting things about Mr. Hawk was his salary. He made \$35 per month and \$5 per year for janitorial services. There was no summer pay, so to make money in the summer he bucked hay for the neighbors for \$1 per day.

My aunt, Peggy Johnson, also attended the school in approximately 1950. Her teacher, Mrs. Knivers, taught about 12 students. Ms. Johnson recalled that the courses were very easy and that as soon as you were finished with your lesson you could go outside and play. It didn't even matter if the answers were right or not. Her fondest memory was that the books the class used were the same ones her grandfather and father had used in their schoolboy years.

Peggy Johnson's days at Mt. Pleasant were numbered, because the school was to be

closed down in 1951. The various one room schoolhouses in the area were to be consolidated into one large school called Lacombe. This brought about a lot of changes to the students. For one, there was no transportation to and from school, so the parents had to drive the students. This is where part of my family history was lost Karen Barnhart, my mother, never attended the school, but she spent quite a bit of her childhood playing in it When she was very small she made her first trip up the hill from her house to the lonely schoolhouse with her father, a former student. He showed her where he had carved his name into one of the desks during his school days. From then on she was attached to the building and she and her cousin used to play school in it. She was heartbroken when it was moved across the road to be used as a barn. This is where another piece of my history was lost.

The history of the school was lost because the records were not kept. When the building was moved, all of the records were given to anyone who wanted them. My family ended up with the ledger from 1933-1937. The rest of the building was used as a barn. The desks were thrown outside to rot, and the bell from the cupola was hauled away. Eventually the building fell down in ruins and was later burned. It was still standing when I was very little, but I don't remember it very well.

I admire the people who are saving Rock Hill School, because they are saving a piece of history. Too often we forget the importance of our past. If only some of the records had been saved from the past we might be able to see how the students were affected by the consolidation of the early schools. It might have given us some more information to help with the decision we are facing today, consolidation of the independent districts. As they say, "If we don't learn about the past, we are condemned to repeat it" How many pieces of history will disintegrate into dust before people take pride in their heritage and strive to preserve pieces of the past for future generations?

WORKS CITED

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Johnson, Peggy. Former student. Personal interview. 27 March 1994.
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