

# Sandridge

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## *The Old Ramshackle School From When the Bells Rang*



That's what the kids called the first school built at Sandridge in 1854. My mother went to school there. That old school rocked when the winds blew. The teacher was afraid to stay

inside. It was a one room school with a big old stove in the center and the stove pipe went right up through the ceiling. There were windows on the south and north sides. Water was carried from a neighbor's well in a bucket and everyone used the same dipper for drinks. Later another school was built, somewhat larger than the ramshackle school.

A new school building was built in 1930. It, too, was a frame building much like the former ones. There was a wood type furnace, a cloak room, and a pump. Desks were toward the back of the room close to the furnace, so kids could keep warm. There were teeter-totters outside on the playground. In 1965 Sandridge and Plainview consolidated. During the 1970's a brother and sister combination taught at these two schools: Floyd Swanson at Plainview, and Minnie Swanson Gnos at Sandridge. An old brass hand bell was used to call us from recess and lunch times when we played outside.

New units have been built north of the school that was used from 1930 to early 1970's. This school has been painted red with white trim and is used for storage of school desks and other such items.

*Ref: Mr. Robert Wheeler  
Drawn on location, 1972.*

***Note:** In 1970, when I sketched the school it was painted white and a new flag pole was being put in place. The cement at its base was still wet and I remember asking why there was a new flag pole, and was told that it was in memory of a student who had been killed during the Vietnam War. On revisiting the school in 1982, I took a closer look at the flag pole and saw about three feet from the base a small metal plaque with these words:*

*"In loving memory  
Larry Jay Wheeler  
Who lost his life  
For service of God  
And his Country."  
Aug. 12, 1969*

*When I was talking to Mr. Wheeler, whom I interviewed about Sandridge, I mentioned this. His reply was "Larry Wheeler was my nephew, beloved son of my brother, Dean R. Wheeler and his wife, Alice."*

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***From Roger Belveal, LUHS Class of 1978:***

It happens that Larry Jay Wheeler's mother Alice was my first school teacher and one of the kindest dearest ladies I've ever known. She taught for many years at McDowell Creek school. I attended first grade there in the fall of 1966. Mrs. Alice Wheeler taught first and second grades together in the one school room.

I remember well her telling us about her son, Jay, who had joined the army. She was extremely proud of him. She told us the story of sending him cookies which the sergeant made him open and share with the rest of the platoon so they wouldn't be in his barracks attracting pests.

One day he visited our class wearing his olive green uniform. He was very shy even before a class of first and second graders. She proudly introduced him. It was just a few months later that I remember the newspaper article about his death just before he was to come home for his wedding:

**Re: [LUHS] Larry Jay Wheeler, 6/12/1946 to 8/12/1969:**

*Larry Wheeler, 23, Tangent, was killed in Vietnam as the result of hostile action, the U.S. Army said Saturday. Wheeler was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Wheeler, Rt. 1 Box 197, Tangent. Wheeler attended Western Mennonite High School near Salem. He also attended George Fox College, Newberg, for three years and Oregon State University in Corvallis for one year. He was due to return to the United States in early September and was engaged to Kathleen Garner of Albany.*

*Invitations to the 14 Sep (1969) wedding had already been made up when word was received of Wheeler's death. — from the Sunday Oregonian, Portland Oregon, 17 Aug 1969)*

A couple of years ago I took a consulting job in Washington, D.C. Larry's name was the first one that I looked for on wall of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial. I arrived late in the evening. It was still winter and I had no flashlight. By following the reflection of the moon against the smooth black granite I found the name of Larry Jay Wheeler on panel 19W. And I remembered.



*After the construction of several short-lived buildings, this structure was completed in 1931 to house the Sandridge School. More than 70 years later it is still standing and still in good condition (June 2003).*

**Although it started life as a “little red schoolhouse” the Sandridge School has been painted white at least once in its history.**

