

My Eight Years at LaFollette Grove Grade School

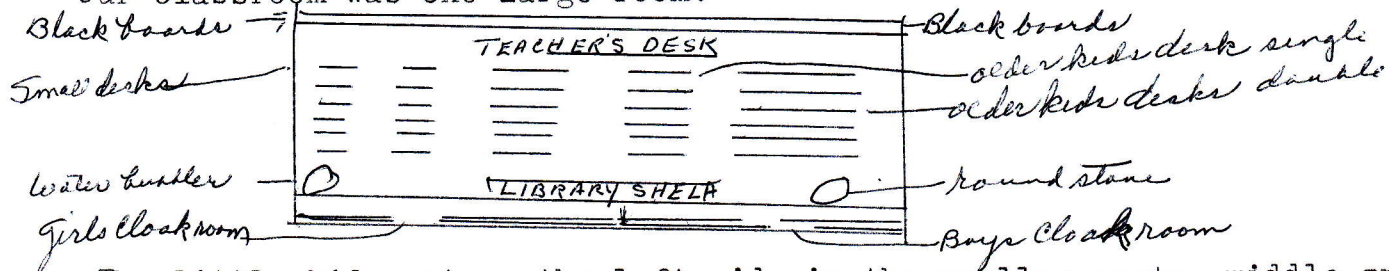
I started school in September of 1931, I would be 7 in January of 1932. I graduated 8th grade in 1939 and Mr. Brusewitz came to the cheese house and handed my certificate of graduation to me on the deck of the cheese house. Nothing fancy back then.

My school was named LaFollette Grove School and located east of Zachow. We walked $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to school in the morning. We usually left home at 7:00 AM, if it was later, we ran the last $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on a road so we would not be late to school. The mile and one-quarter was on the railroad tracks. When it was very cold we would stop and try to warm up as much as we could in a culvert that ran under the railroad tracks.

My school was a yellow brick building with wide steps covering the whole front of the building. There were two doors, one for girls and one for boys. We had lots of windows and a school bell on the roof. There were two wooden out-houses (out door toilets) 3 holers situated at the south end of the school lot. Again, one for girls and one for boys. They were built far apart from each other and look out if some one trespassed, They would be in trouble with the teacher.

When we arrived at school the girls went in the east door to their cloak room and the boys went in the west door to their cloak room. The cloak rooms had metal hooks so that we could hang up our clothes. First day of school we would decide who hung their clothes on which hook. The boys had in their cloak room the rope that rang the school bell. Sometimes the bell would ring as a boy wanted to see if the rope really rang the bell. Again that person would be in trouble with the teacher.

Our classroom was one large room.



The little kids sat on the left side in the smaller seats, middle grades sat in the middle rows and the big kids sat on the right side. We all faced the teacher and her desk.. This way she could keep her eyes on all the kids. She did an excellant job too. We all carried lunch pails, some had lard pails with covers. We placed our lunch buckets beneath the shelves that held books and was called our library. We had two recesses, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We had a noon hour when we would eat our lunch and play after. We never ate all our lunch at a recess as then we were hungry the rest of the day. We did not have snacks and the school did not furnish any food. I grew up during the late 20's and the 30's when times were very bad. There was not a lot of money and so there were home made bread and jelly sandwiches, once in a while baloney or cheese sandwiches and a few cookies. Some had milk in a small bottle from home but we usually drank water, with help from a small cup packed also in our pail. We very seldom had fruit. I remember Orville Hanstedt would have a tangerine at Christmas holiday time and bring it to school and peel it. We all stood around him just to smell the aroma of the tangerine and drool. All schools now have packaged snacks and breakfast and lunch for the children. Our lessons were written on the blackboards. We did our homework at school-who wanted to carry books $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles home and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles back to school in the morning? There were no busses and our parents had to work. We were very lucky to get a ride once in a while.

The Radtke children had a ride every morning and when it was real cold Dad would ask Alb. Radtke if I could have a ride. Then I would have to walk to the Chevrolet garage. When I was in 7th grade, my Dad would let me drive his car to school when it rained. That is how I learned to drive Chevrolet cars.

We had one teacher for all 8 grades. No kindergarden at that time. She scheduled her time for all classes for 8 grades. Now there were only perhaps 4 or 5 pupils to a class so she could give each one time. She taught the following: Reading, Writing(Cursive), Arithmetic, Spelling, Grammer and Language, Geography, History, Civics, both US and Wis., Agriculture, and Physics and Hygiene. We did not have much in the way of Music and drawing or Art. I remember all of Shawano County schools had to practice Music for a month as Madame Schuman-Heink, a very famous Opera singer, came to the Shawano Fair grounds, and we had to sing for her under the direction of a Dr. Baker. He came to the Angelica school where neighboring schools would come to practice.

When it was our turn to have class, we would go to the front of the school and sit on seats from the first desks. She always called out the name of the class and after a month we would know when our class was the next to come. We always did this quietly because the other kids were studying. There was never much of a disturbance as there was always punishment. Sitting in a corner on a stool, or writing "I will be quiet" 50 or a hundred times. If recess came and you were not finished, you lost your recess. If an emergency required you to go to the outhouse, the teacher would nod his or her head when you raised your hand. We were very careful to use our recesses for those important things. Boys filled the water bubbler from an outside pump, carried wood from the woodshed, rang the school bell and girls cleaned blackboards, took blackboard erasers outside and pounded them to get out the chalk dust. That was almost a privilege.

HECTOGRAPH: Teacher made a jellied substance in a pan. She usually did this at home. She had a special pencil that she used on a clean sheet of paper usually for tests. She then laid the paper on the hardened jellied substance for a few minutes until the writing was transferred to the jelly. That paper was removed and we would put clean sheets of paper on the jelly and we would have copies. Could make about 10 copies if I remember correctly. Now we have modern copying machines. We had flash cards for Arithmetic, spelling bees; we would divide up into 2 groups and really compete for the honor of being first. There were special times for Spelling Bees. Playtime during the noon hour in warm weather : We had swings, a merry-go-round with seats; we would push with our feet and we would go in a circle, but not very fast. We played tag and hide & go-seek. In winter there were snowball fights, fox and goose, build snow men and snow houses. Inside when it was too cold to play outdoors we would play Jacks with a little rubber ball. Christmas time we would have a play, readings, and songs. This was one of the few times we had to sing and practice singing. We exchanged names for presents. The older kids would set up the stage(wooden planks on wooden horses) and we had sheets for stage curtains. That special nite, usually the 22 or 23 of Dec., the parents would come in the evening and we would perform for them. Usually we had nicer clothes for that evening, having to wear them from morning on, we were very careful not to get a stain or dirt on the clothes. Maybe we might get an apple or orange or candy cane as a present for being good from our teacher. He or she had a very small salary. The last day of school there was a picnic-we played games and the moms would make lemonade, nice sandwiches, cakes and jello.

Clothes in winter: wool underwear with long arms and legs, long wool socks to go over the underwear. Long wool scarves to tie around our head, neck, and face in the bitter winter. I had a big wool knit hat that I could pull over my ears. If you had leggings, there were tiny buttons and hooks to open up and my fingers would hurt very badly because the fingers were very cold, plus the leggings were full of ice and snow. We had rubbers that had metal snaps. I received a snow-suit when I was in 7th grade. What a wonderful gift!

We always addressed our teacher as Mr. or Miss. I had a Miss Helen Habeck for 3 years, Miss Martha Horn for 2 years, Miss Lois Flier for 2 years, and Mr. Carl Bruesiwitz for my last year in the grades. You never went up to the teacher during the school day except when you had class or at a recess or noontime. You never raised your hand to ask a question while she had class. A ruler or pointer would land on your shoulder if you were sassy or perhaps come up behind your seat and pull the short hair behind your ears. Now a teacher cannot touch a child.

We did share valentines , but if we were angry with someone we would not put a valentine in their box.

We had a farmer, who lived next to the school, who would tell us to come into their home when the teacher was late, and no heat in the school. The teacher usually came early and had a fire started in the wood stove. The teacher would let us stand around the stove so we could warm up in the morning. If there were only 5 or 6 kids at school and it was a cold day, we would all sit around the stove and have our classes there. We really looked up to our teachers and respected them.

I still believe if children went to schools where they were exposed to all 8 grades, they would be better prepared in Grammer, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. I have seen the examples of their new math and can understand why our students are so poor in math. Children are no longer required to think, every thing possible in technology is done for them.

We made life-long friends and as we grew older we drifted away but when we hit our 60's and 70's somehow we get back together for a chance to reminisce about the "good old days".

Please forgive me if I, Lorraine Hoefs Gentz, have forgotten some facts, as this is the ramblings of a 85 year old former student.