

Country school days

I take up my pen this early morning with the full realization that I'm falling into an all too common trap. The trap is starting a new story before I have finished the last. In recent days Fort Klock members have been occupied with the erection of a new flag pole at the old Fort Klock one room school. The fourth of July when we will dedicate it is fast approaching. Doubtless each of those who are involved with the project conjures up very different memories. My own take me back to the late 1930s and early 40s when I attended old District #10 school at Marshville, NY. The first order of each day was ringing the bell far up in the belfry to bring the students in for the beginning of the session. Everyone wanted to be the one to pull the rope to ring that bell. It is not so hard to realize that in earlier days my mother and her father before her had wanted to do it also. Being a natural born collector I will now search for some mementos of my own days in that school. The building is long gone, its contents sold or given away not long before it was torn down. I secured some of the things that had accumulated bits and pieces in the form of stones, minerals, books and examples of projects thought by the teachers too outstanding to throw away.

At this point in my story I must realize that many of my own recent acquaintances feel that I am not too gracefully entering my second childhood. Those who have known me from that long ago time probably know that I never escaped my first. It was quite common for the pupils to pick a shiny stone along their walk to school to show the teacher or one another. The list of those treasures might include an Indian arrow point or some other small relic from only yesterday or from many yesterdays ago. The scenario might be: "Ah! There is an unusually colorful flower or that shaped different shaped leaf. I'll just take that along to school and see if teachers can tell me what it is". The students are all like family and all can add something to our store of knowledge.

The day and age of one room schools in education was simple. Quite possibly unreal to today's students and their parents also. The taxes to finance a one room school district would be shocking to today's taxpayers. Shocking, that is, by how small they were. The students all knew one another and also their parents and grandparents.

Among my mementos is a book of minutes from the school meetings where my father from time to time was trustee, treasurer, or clerk. Not many people came to those meetings but the business of running that small school district did get done. The annual budgets are there also. Each year the teacher was paid about one thousand dollars and the entire budget was roughly twice that. The old minute books span from May 3, 1921, to May 4, 1943. The entries reflected a country lifestyle that was much the same for the school as for the taxpayers' homes. Grandpa Garlock who was a skilled carpenter presented his bill for 40 hours of labor in putting the school building in order at fifty cents an hour. Setting a flag pole was discussed and my father in his minutes as clerk dated May 6, 1941, recorded that the trustee was to get a new steel pole. In his minutes of his final meeting dated May 4, 1943 only 8 voters were present. The steel flag pole again was mentioned as follows: "Flag pole which fell over will be reset by trustees." Marshville school doubtless would still continue for a few years but the final bell was soon to ring.

In the far back of the book was a copy of a very official looking document under the heading "the University of the State of New York" it bore a fancy gold seal and the date June 5, 1944 just two days after my 14th birthday.

It laid out the Central School District which would be the death of one room country schools in our area. Now only the Amish schools remain as a reminder that once there was a much different education system.

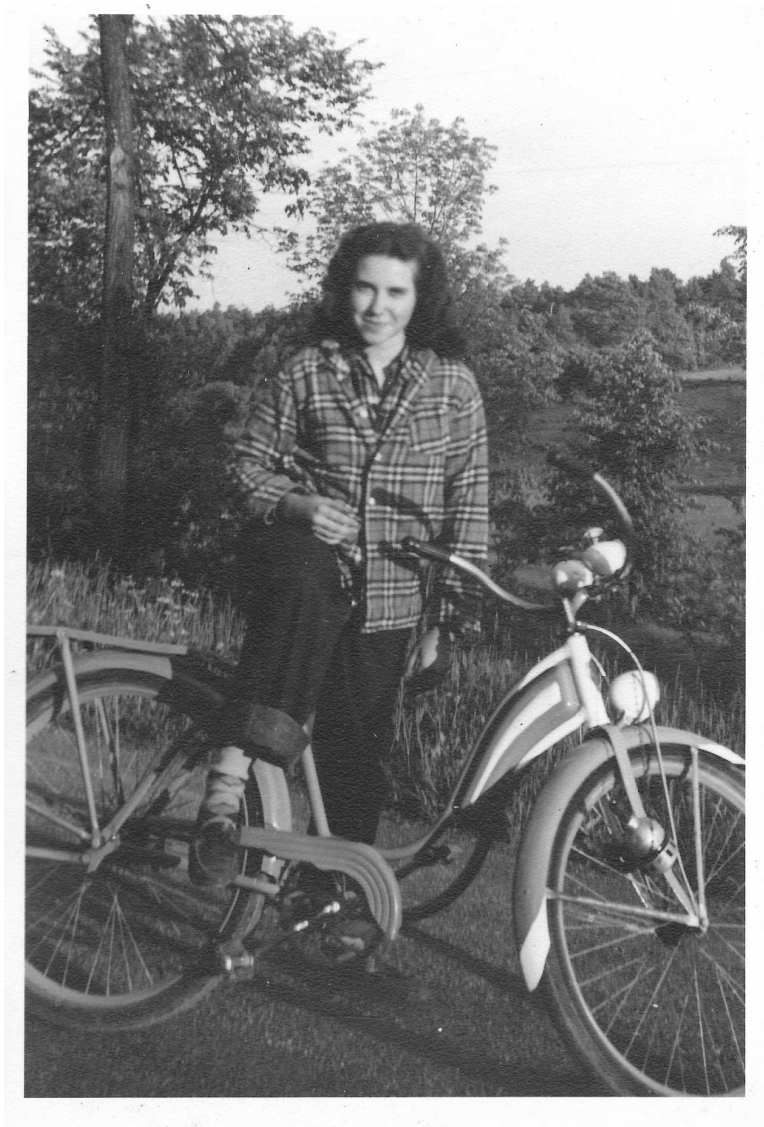


District #10 school at Marshville, NY

In addition to the old minute book I located among my keepsakes reminders of fellow students some who were very special to me. From the fourth, fifth and sixth grades three steel ring bound 10" by 16" books have survived. Fossils, dinosaurs and rocks were the topics. They sure prove that at ten years old I was not a budding artist. I must admit that adding another 73 years has not improved that trait in me. Even the heavy white paper they were done on brings back a memory. It was from the ends of large rolls that came from the Beech Nut printing department where dad was a foreman from 1932 until 1970.

There were only a few students in old District #10 at that time and several are no longer with us. A girl named Carolyn Scott and her sister Ruth can never escape from my memory. Carolyn had a great God-given talent as an artist. That talent shows up in these old project books. As a boy I so admired her long dark braids. I guess I

thought that Indian girls had braids just like that. It was a sad day when she entered high school and in an effort to be modern those braids were cut off. I still have the one she gave me so many years ago.



Carolyn Scott

The lot where old District #10 school stood at Marshville is now just another vacant piece of rural land but nothing can eradicate those memories of long ago.

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, June 24 2013