

Brickton School Remembered

“School” wasn’t always the way it is today, with four schools of several rooms each and numerous opportunities for study and sports.

Agnes Lueck, route 4, remembers a different time, the years from 1912 to 1918, the time when she attended the school at Brickton.

For the uninitiated, Brickton was a small village once situated about 2 ½ miles north of Princeton. Village life centered around the five brickyards which were operated there.

The Brickton school was accredited and affiliated with the Princeton school system and as such was supervised by Princeton’s Superintendent. It was a two-room school.

A beginner’s grade, first and second grade occupied what the children called the ‘little room.’ Grades three through six were in the ‘big room.’ For seventh and eighth grade, they were expected to go to Princeton by any method they could. “No bussing then.” Miss Lueck said.

The school hours were from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with time off for recess, lunch, and the customary vacations.

Desks were stationary. The building was heated by a large jacketed stove which burned huge chunks of wood. Wraps were hung in an unheated cloakroom adjoining each classroom. A large crock of water with a common dipper stood near the entrance accessible to all the children from the entire building. Outside toilets were located on each side of the woodshed in back of the building.

There was a small room called a library but it wasn’t like today’s libraries. Rather it was a storage room for unused books and supplies. It also served another purpose – an area to punish an unruly student, should the occasion arise.

The playground was gravel with absolutely no equipment provided.

Miss Lueck has fond memories of her days in the Brickton school and of its teachers.

“In spite of these austere and meager facilities, Brickton did have its good teachers who in their kindly, patient and dedicated way helped children from equally barren homes to learn”, she said. “One such gracious little lady was Anna Hoehn who loved children, and in her quiet sweet manner, left an indelible impression on many lives, my own included.

“Reading was taught by the McGuffey method of diacritical marking and analyzing of every word. Somehow this method built power and strength and the ability to read and, to this day, I’m grateful for the independence this gave me to develop, explore, and extend my reading skills. This capacity to read and the love of reading has been one of the greatest attributes of my early school experience dating back to Anna Hoehn Pietsch. Furthermore, her warm, gentle personality permeated my life and imbued me with a love of learning and the love of school. Who could ask for more?”

Another teacher also made a deep impression on Miss Lueck. She continues her story; “In the sixth grade I met another teacher who made a real and lasting impact upon my life, awakening a dormant and latent talent in art. While children in today’s schools take art experiences for granted, this was a rare delight to have a teacher who enjoyed painting herself and provided her pupils with water colors, paper, and brushes and the time to explore! How I treasured those lessons and the joy of learning with her. Only in college was the opportunity to reappear, but the taste and fundamental interest was awakened by this sixth grade teacher, Mildred James Iverson, whose memory I shall always treasure.

“The children who had Miss James knew she cared for them in a very special way. Up until the time she came, no one had particularly paid much attention to how or where or what we ate. Lunch was always brought from home in a syrup pail and stored behind the school stove until noon. Mrs. James suggested we each bring a potato to bake in the ashes beneath the big stove (the beginning of hot lunches?). She invited us to gather in a friendly circle around the big stove while we ate so we could enjoy one another’s company. The whole idea was just great, warmth prevailed in our hearts and we were happy!

“Such are my pleasant personal memories of the Brickton school years 1912 – 1918.”

(Source: "A Short Account of Brickton" pamphlet - Princeton Union-Eagle, Princeton, MN., May 29, 1977.)