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MEMORIES OF OUR SCHOOL DAYS IN OYAMA ..... MS. E. 1942 - ARNOLD & GLADYS TRESHITT

THE SCHOOL ... The school was built in 1917 and accommodated pupils from Grades 1 to 8, at that time. It was a two-story building with two classrooms. The basement consisted of two rooms, one for the boys & one for the girls and they were used as play areas. A furnace room was in between the two rooms. There were two side entrances, one for the boys & one for the girls, and a front entrance strictly for the teachers & visitors. Each classroom had a cloakroom and a small office for each teacher. In 1921 an extra classroom was added to the back of the school for high school students. In 1922 water pipes were installed and a drinking fountain was put upstairs in the main hallway. The school was wired for electricity in 1935. Outhouses were used until 1938. At that time the School Board decided to install flush toilets. Chords of 4' long firewood was bought from Mr. Vernon Ellison for the furnace. It was piled in long rows at the back of the school. One of the older students always took care of the furnace.

ROUTINE .... The high school teacher always rang the school hand-bell at 9 A.M., recess, noon hour and at 3 P.M. when school was dismissed. At 9 A.M. the pupils assembled at the flag pole and stood at attention and saluted for the raising of the flag. (Union Jack). Then the boys and girls lined up at their separate entrances and two-by-two they marched up the stairs to their classrooms. The Lord's Prayer was repeated by the students every morning. Our school subjects were arithmetic, writing, spelling, reading, geography, history, science and art. The School Board hired Mrs. Darvill to teach music once a week and under her leadership our school choir entered many Music Festivals.

One time we took first place in Vernon. We can still remember singing "Green Sleeves" and the "Rose of Tralee". Our Christmas school concerts were always held in the Oyama Community Hall. One time, during one of these concerts, the

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electric power failed, but the show went on with the use of lanterns, lamps and candles. One play that we both participated in at one of the concerts was "The ToyMaker of Nuremberg." Because it was such a great success, our teacher Mr. Bissell, decided that we should enter it in the Vernon Drama Festival. To our disgust it meant daily practices for it, but I guess it was worth it as we took second place, which was a big achievement for our small school.

**TEACHERS** ---- The teachers who taught us in the school were Miss Ruth Wilson, Miss A. East, Mr. J. Libb, Mr. L. Bissell, Mr. G. Hall & Miss M. Fulton. Most of them were very good teachers. When Mr. Bissell was hired by the School Board, he had been told by the school authorities in Victoria that he would have to deal with a "discipline problem" in the Oyama school. Consequently at the beginning he was very strict and we were all "scared stiff" of him. However, within a year or so, apart from the odd student jumping out of the window, discipline was no longer a criteria.

Whenever the school inspector arrived it was obvious that the teachers were nervous and under a lot of tension. When he entered the class room we all had to stand at attention beside our desks and repeat in unison, "Good morning, Mr. Delong." We will never forget him. He had huge ears and always jingled money in his pocket.

**SPORTS** ---- Soccer was the main sport for the boys. Mr. Bissell was an excellent soccer coach and under his supervision the boys won the North Okanagan Pheasant Trophy four times. They only had one soccer ball and Mr. Bissell would buy linseed oil to put on it to keep it in good condition. If it got damaged beyond repairs they were unable to play until the school board replaced it with another. The team could always count on Mrs. Bert Crawford for transportation to the Mackey School in Coldstream or to wherever the games were being held. He always volunteered to go, so it was a familiar sight to see his car at the school.

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The girls played softball most of the time and they too had problems with equipment. They had two bats and one ball and when the ball needed repair, Mrs. Bissell would take it home & re-stitch it for us them.

Basket ball games were played in the Oyama Community Hall & ping-pong was played in the room under the high school. It had a dirt floor and we can remember when the School Board covered it & part of the grounds around the school with cinders from the Railway. This was to prevent the mud from being tracked into the school. However, the cinders were soon removed because the pupils' clothes, faces & hands were always black from the cold dirt.

Our high school teacher, Mr. Hall, also enjoyed playing soccer. We can recall the time when he was so involved in the game at recess time, he forgot to ring the bell and the game continued on until noon hour.

An annual Sports Day was held at the oval in Kelowna and students from our school participated in races, high jumping & broad jumping, etc.

Our school had swings & teeter-totters for the younger students and at certain times of the year skipping, hop-scotch and marbles were a popular pastimes.

Other activities .... On one school outing I can remember Mr. Bissell taking us on a hike to First Lake. It was a lot of fun. We had a paper-chase game on the way there. During the winter we skated on a rink near the Canal or on Wood Lake, if it froze over. Some of the boys played hockey.

Halloween night was fun too. We paraded down the road with "Guy Fox" and burned him on a big bonfire in an open field near the Community Hall. Then we would go into the Hall for fun & games & dunking for apples, etc. One Halloween some energetic students moved the "five-holer" from the Railway

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Station and took it up the front entrance of the school to the main hallway. The next morning the teachers & students were greeted with a sign in front of the outhouse, reading, "HOME MADE ICE CREAM FOR SALE."

STUDENTS ----- We remember the Oyama School students as being a friendly, energetic, carefree bunch of kids. Because there were about 65 students in the school, we knew them all. Nearly everyone lived on an orchard or some kind of a farm. This was during the depression years so it was a difficult time for most everyone. He can remember seeing transients riding on top of rail freight cars. It was a familiar sight to see them from the school grounds.

Though most of us had to help our parents on the farm with the thinning or picking of apples and milking cows, etc. we still found time to enjoy fishing, hiking, swimming, hunting, boating, etc. It was a good, clean, healthy, country life style. We did a lot of walking in those days. Whenever there was a party or dance at the Community Hall on a Friday night, it meant an extra 6 miles of walking for some of us.

Some of the boys took guns to school so that they could go hunt ducks at noon hour and after school. During school hours the guns were kept in the teacher's office.

One time when our high school teacher, Mr. Hall, had left our classroom for a few minutes, the students decided to change the time on the clock & put the hands ahead. They coaxed one of the girls to do it. The clock was on a high shelf at the front of the room and all went well until she proceeded to put the clock back on the shelf. At that moment, Mr. Hall came back into the room & because the clock hadn't been pushed back far enough, — it toppled to the floor with a big crash! The poor girl had to pay for a new clock.

Oyama had the only High School between Vernon & Rutland.

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Students from Winfield attended our school. One of them drove a car and transported the students to & from school. One morning when Gilbert Berry was driving, the steering mechanism broke on his car and it went off the bridge and into the Canal in Oyama. Fortunately the students only suffered minor injuries.

One day when the school nurse was coming, we heard that everyone would have to take their clothes off and be checked by her. Some of the boys didn't want to have any part in that so they left the school without permission and went hunting. When they returned their teacher gave them the strap on both of their hands.

Aldred's Store was close to the school so most of the students went there for their school supplies and penny candy such as jaw breakers and toffee suckers.

The Oyama Post Office was also close to the school. The mail was brought out from Vernon & was sorted in the Post Office, but there was no mail delivery to mail boxes, so some of us would pack mail home after school for our neighbours & receive 25¢ - 50¢ <sup>a month</sup> for doing this.

Some of the parents, who had cars, took turns in driving their children to school when they were in grades 1 or 2 and if they lived 2 1/2 to 3 miles away. After that most of us walked until we were able to ride bicycles. It was a long hike especially during the winter because the road was only ploughed ~~for~~ half of the distance we had to walk. The plough, which was made of wood in the shape of a V was pulled behind the truck. Some of the students rode down the hills to school on sleighs or bob-sleds. Oyama got its first school-bus in 1954.

One student lived over at Geer's Bay where rattlesnakes could always be found. One morning he killed 4 of them & brought them to school & hid them in the girls' desk-drawer. Needless to say, that caused a commotion.

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CLOSING OF THE OLD OYAMA SCHOOL ----

On October 7, 1979 a closing ceremony was held for the old Oyama School. The special day drew a large crowd of about 400 people. Every teacher and student from 1917 to 1979 had been included in the invitations. They came from as far away as Los Angeles, Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa and gathered together to reunite and honour an era gone by.

All of our 9 children, who were also students in the school, were all there for the closing ceremony, except for one who lives in Newfoundland.

The old school was very dear to us all, so it was a sad day for everyone when it was demolished in November 1979.

History

In about 1938-39 the School Board decided to change the ping-pong room in the basement into another high school classroom. Another teacher, Miss Fulton, was hired to teach Math & French there.

(picture...  
The fire-escape at the front of the school was built in the later years.)

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