

Silver Falls School

written by Dorothy BROWNING Pieren

I went to Silver Falls School from 1931 to 1939 all eight grades. It was a small room with all eight grades together and one teacher. The most students at any one time was 27 when I was in the third grade. 1939 was the last year, and after that year the students in the upper Blaine area went to the Blaine School as there were not enough children to have school there anymore.

During the 8 years I went we walked most of the time. There was a bus at times, but it was hard to get anyone that could do it. (A) car was not big enough, and it did not pay enough. Or everyone was too busy on their (own) farms to do it. I walked 3 1/2 miles each way and had a brother (with me) most of the time except the last years.

I remember how we used to have to run and climb a tree when a mean bull would come charging and bawling after us. That would terrify and scare me terribly. I remember staying up in a tree one night walking home until my father finished all the cows by hand milking and later came looking for me to take me home. To this day I am deathly scared of bulls. We would get wet and cold walking, but the teacher would always let us get near the wood stove and dry out. I would wear my father's old rain clothes. My mother would cut down and make over the best she could. We never had good boots or good shoes to keep our feet warm. No one was fussy about what you wore as everyone was poor. Anything old or hand-me-down were worn, and no one thought anything about it during those years.

One teacher would teach all the grades at once. We had reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic and some drawing (art). We learned to sing songs by all the class singing together. I never remember any discipline problems and few fights. We usually loved our teachers. One of our teachers, Francis Steinbach, batched with her two boys in a garage which was in the corner of the school ground. Usually the teachers were single and boarded with the Jones family down the road. Fannie Smith taught a few years and was very well liked.

We had a round swing (which) was all the playground equipment. We played ball games and other games all together with all the grades. We of course brought a lunch of a sandwich or so and maybe an apple.

I remember having an earache one day, so the teacher sent me to the nearest neighbor house where I crawled behind a big old wood stove to lay. The neighbor man, Ernest Bohna, came in the house at noon to eat, saw me, lit his pipe, got down and smoked his pipe in my ear. That was what he did for his children.

Many Indian artifacts were found on the school yard as it was near the river. The Indians caught fish just above the school grounds and brought them down to cook and eat in that spot years before. The Jones family owned that land previously and were the first white family in that area up the river. They were led into that very area by an Indian chief over the Indian trail from Sheridan in 1883. The Indians would camp in that school yard spot just below Silver Falls and catch the fish as they gathered to jump the falls. That is all another story, but that is how the Indian artifacts came to be there.