

The First Delight Valley School

The earliest schoolhouse in Delight Valley was opened in December of 1919 with 25 students. A wooden two-story structure with classrooms on the second floor, an auditorium, utility, storage and restrooms on the first. One student, who attended school in the 1930's, said that restrooms



and furnace room were built, but never hooked up, so students still had to use an outhouse by the fence and classrooms were heated with wood burning cast-iron stoves.

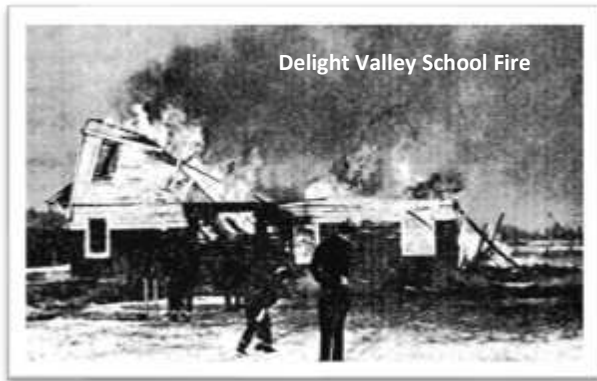
Virginia Sheldon, Delight Valley class of 1939, shared memories of the school in a written letter. She recalled Mrs. Culver as her teacher. "She would bring some stew meat or soup bone and we older girls would make stew. Each student would bring a potato, onion or carrot. Sometimes the teacher would bring a kettle of beans. She did this because there were children who came to school without lunch. Times were rough for a lot of people." Virginia attended school during the Great Depression, when things indeed were hard for everyone.

Jane A. Davidson Myers, recalls the original floor as wooden slats over a cement foundation. It wasn't long before area flooding warped and damaged the wooden floor. Flooding occurred regularly before the dams were built in the 40's, so it was decided that the wood floor would not be replaced. Jane also recalled stalls to the side of the building used for horses, which some kids rode to school, and for the teacher's car. During her time at the school there were two teachers, Mrs. Culver and Mrs. Van Schoiack. Mrs. Van Schoiack would bring in new books each week that she had borrowed from the Eugene Library. On Fridays she scheduled extra reading time and taught piano lessons.

The building would proudly serve the communities children for 30 years. In December of 1949 the old two story building would step aside as a new building welcomed the young scholars. The older building hoped to serve, now as a play shed and storage location. Its



life on the sidelines would prove to be bitterly brief. In January of 1950 the structure caught fire and burn to the ground. Early on a Tuesday morning, 15 minutes before recess, staff noticed smoke coming from the old furnace room in the play shed. Before long alarms were raised, children shuffled to safety, staff and neighbors arrived to help, fire engines were called in from the nearby communities of Cottage Grove and Lorane. Employees at the nearby Chambers Mill stopped production and ran to help. Some mill workers' had children attending the school, which must have caused a bit of panic upon seeing the smoke coming from the school.



They could not get the fire out in time to save the structure, so they switched to protecting the new school, which was only 50 feet away. It would take the hard work and **diligence** of fire fighters, mill workers and neighbors, some who stayed through the night to keep first the flames then the embers from reaching the new building.

We can assume that some, maybe many, who stayed to keep the fire in check, were among the **alumni** of the old school. They stayed to protect their children's future while watching their past crumble to the ground. What memories must have filled their heads as they sat through that long night. Images of stew boiling on the wood stove through morning sessions. Horses waiting patiently in the stalls for the end of the school day. Friday piano lessons and Mrs. Van Schoiack toting in a new pile of books from the Eugene library. Of recesses spent in the auditorium. Memories of a building that was much more than simple wooden boards and cement foundation.

Discussion Points

1. How was the first Delight Valley School different than your school?
 2. Why do you think the community decided to build the first school and why was it important to them?
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Vocabulary

Alumni: a graduate or former student

Diligence: careful and constant work or effort

Recall: bring a fact, event, or situation back into one's mind; remember

