BACK TO SCHOOL IN 1911

As the Greece kids of 1911 were headed for the first day of school it is doubtful if they were singing a popular song of the day, “School Days”. The refrain asks one to “take a trip on memory’s ship back to the by gone days” - “sail to the old village school”. The chorus follows after a few more lines with “School days, school days, dear old golden rule days” - “readin’ and ‘ritin’ and ‘rithmetic – taught to the tune of a hickory stick”.

Already the small, sometimes cramped, one room school was seen as an object of nostalgia. But the one or two room school was still the norm for Greece. In the late 19th century Greece had almost nineteen separate school districts, each with one school. The village of Charlotte had a two story brick grammar school built in the 1870’s and a new high school had been opened in 1908.

A four year high school education was not what a farm child would expect. Eight grades were considered enough with perhaps two years of further education. Farm boys often went right from the eighth grade to work on the farm or employment with the ever expanding company on Lake Avenue at Ridge Road, The Eastman Kodak Company. The extra income helped the farm family to survive. The teacher’s, usually women, were sometimes hard to supply for still rural sections of Greece. She taught all eight grades, unless the school was a newer two room building. Then two teachers would split the grades between them. It was expected a teacher would leave her position if she married. In addition to the three “R’s” of what was considered the basic’s in the 19th century, there was added Geography, English grammar, world, national and local history. Several of the early one room schools were replaced with four or six room schools, and they often had central heat plus electric lighting. Gone were the coal stove in the center of the room and a few wall bracket Kerosene lamps. Though it was evident that larger and more adequate schools were needed it took another almost twenty years before the start of consolidating school districts began in Greece. By World War Two few of the old district schools were left. The last few were gone by the early 1950’s.

Our museum exhibit of a small one room school gives a fair approximation of a school room of the early 1900’s. You brought your lunch and ate at your desk or out doors. Drinking water was from a nearby well. The privy was well away from the well and the school. The long desks with several students in a row on a long bench had given way to the improved individual desks by the 1900’s. Sports, were usually simple games or a rude baseball diamond was fashioned on a plot of relatively flat ground. Each district school had text books and a small library. These were the property of the district. Writing on or defacing a book was not tolerated and parents were often assessed for such damage.

Some of the venerable school building were converted long ago to business or private dwellings, while others just vanished. Few Greece resident’s of today can boast that they attended a small village school of fewer than four rooms.

The cover for the sheet music “School Days” by Cobb & Edwards.

District school #17 at Latta Rd. N.E. of Long Pond Rd. still stands there.

Pictures continued on page 7…

If you have any information on our photos, call Alan at 663-1706.

Photos, Data supplied by Alan Mueller, Greece Historian’s Office, Greece Historical Society
The newly formed Venture Crew 1910 of the Seneca Waterways Council of the Boy Scouts met June 26th for a tour of our museum, plus a behind the scene view of the archival storage loft and the Historian’s Office. The crew consists of teens who like history and archeology.

Upcoming Programs/Events

November 8th, 2011  Sea Breeze Amusement Park

Matthew Caufield, archivist of Seabreeze Amusement Park, will share his knowledge of the history of this, the fourth oldest amusement park in the United States, with an emphasis as it was in the 1950s & 1960s.

“Holiday Open House”

Sunday, Dec 11th will be our Holiday Open House. Area Garden clubs will decorate and offer their display decorations for sale. Watch for more information.