

Cedar Hill School

By Dan Slais

One room country schools were a mainstay of importance for rural communities in the early 1900's. The school house served as a neighborhood meeting hall, a polling place, and sometimes just a recreation center, in addition to its educational mission.

Cedar Hill School, located on the Roubidoux Creek in what is now area 36 of Fort Leonard Wood, was one of those school houses. With one teacher, it provided education for over fifteen, and usually twenty or more students per year. Families in the Cedar Hill Community included Adkinson, Atteberry, Christeson, Kerr, Laughlin, Lewis, Carmack, Byram, Sparks, Welch, and Wilson.

The location of Cedar Hill School was on the west side of the Roubidoux, five miles down creek from Morgan Ford, which the Highway H bridge now spans. Houston Road, going south from Waynesville, was on the east side of the creek. Christeson Ford was where the Fort Wood concrete bridge now stands. Kerr Mill and its motorized operation was three-quarters of a mile downstream. Later, Matt Christeson set up a mill, operated by a motor, just above the Cedar Hill Eddy. The Wharton post office and store was about four miles to the south. Further south was Cookville, an important line in the mail route between Waynesville and Bloodland. A ridge, or Wheeler's Woods, ran southwest from Cedar Hill School toward Mount Gibson Church some four miles west. There is a very rough logging road on top of this ridge today. Normally, the road to the north over Sparks or Burchard Hill was the closest way to Waynesville, just six miles away.

Cedar Hill School was a large one-room building with two doors on the front. The building was parallel to the creek, with the front facing south. While the front of the school was at ground level, the back of the building was supported by several feet of foundation to level it on the slope. The approximate 26 by 38 to 40 foot structure had four windows on each side and two windows in the back. The outside was a weather-board or clapboard painted white. The roof was corrugated metal.

On the inside, there was a large blackboard on the wall between the doors. A jumbo wood stove sat in the center of the room, its pipe extending out the back wall to keep the uninsulated schoolhouse warm in winter. The wooden floor was always swept clean,

and was oiled in the summer. The floor was excellent for playing marbles when students could not go out for recess. Of the type shared by two students, the desks were anchored to the floor. Individual desktops with ink wells had room under the top so students could store books. The teacher's desk was in the front. Also, in the front of the classroom was a recitation bench, a board on two short stumps, where different groups or grades of students would go to read or recite information. There was a pump organ in the back corner for singing.

Getting to school was part of the total educational experience. Walking two to three miles or so was typical for the students who attended. Eugene Wilson and his mother, Belle, who was the teacher at Cedar Hill, lived one mile away. Since the school was on a hillside parallel to the Roubidoux, many students had to cross the creek to get to school. Sometimes the creek was dry in this area. Taking shoes off and wading at spots like Button Rock Ford was common for the Laughlin family. High water meant riding over on horseback, remembers Louise Laughlin Garzelli. Other times a wagon or cart was hitched to an old horse to take several students across the creek. Of course, there was the time a big tree fell across the Roubidoux, providing a wonderful, but temporary bridge. At different places students waited and joined each other on the way to school. Occasionally, high water would come up during the day and would force students to take an automobile ride around the creek through Waynesville in order to cross the bridge so that they could come back down the valley to get home.

In the early 1900's, school carried a somewhat different attitude for learning than the 1990's schools today. Students were dedicated to the task of learning, and the responsibility of learning was taken seriously with courtesy and care. Louise Garzelli remembers the respect for the one and only set of encyclopedias in the classroom at Cedar Hill. She notes that students many times washed their hands before using the books. Necessary supplies included a 50/50 or Big Chief tablet and a pencil to do work. Students learned reading, math, and all lessons with wholesome obedience.

Jobs around the school house included starting and keeping up the fire in winter, sweeping the building after school, and bringing in water. The fire



CEDAR HILL SCHOOL'S LAST STUDENTS

(Back row, left to right)—Jim Laughlin, Wayne Laughlin, Dennis Carmack, Maxine Laughlin, Lyla Kerr, Gloria Kerr, Jasper Lewis, Louise Laughlin, and teacher Belle Wilson. (Front row, left to right)—John Kerr, Eugene Wilson, Wayne Biram, John Biram, Henry Lewis, Lloyd Lewis, and Geraldine Adkinson.

Photo supplied by Eugene Wilson.



Pictured above is the Cedar Hill School taken on Oct. 13, 1903. This picture was provided by Mrs. Claude Wilson, the former Belle Christeson, of Waynesville and was taken when she was in the second grade.

For those unfamiliar with the former locations of the old time schools in Pulaski County, Cedar Hill Community was just up the Roubidoux River from Waynesville and is now just within the bounds of Fort Leonard Wood — not far from The present home of the Claudie Laughlin family.

The teacher of the school was John Ichord, father of our Waynesville Postmaster John H. Ichord.

Pictured right to left first row: Effie Christeson, Johnnie Rickerson, Blanche Kerr, Jimmie Logan, Alma Thomas, Claude Laughlin, Otta York, Belle Christeson Wilson. Second row, left to right: Carl Kerr, Andrew Christeson, Edgar Christeson, Walter Kerr, Charles Thomas, Nora Ankens Courson, Mary Young, Ina Wallace, Belle Logan, Maggie Logan, Bruce Adkins. Third row, right to left: Jesse Rickerson, Lavona York, LaVena Laughlin Ichord, Effie Laughlin Budd, Edith York, Elsie Logan, Martha York Bales, Lola Laughlin Ichord, Belva Yarbrough, Orville Laughlin, Chester Wallace, Bland York. Fourth row, left to right: Wilson Young, Harry Adkins, Clifford French Mert McGregor, Emir Christeson, John Ichord - teacher, Eddie Christeson (twin of Emir), Ansel Christeson and Nick York.

and the cleaning were usually hired out to an older student for the salary of three dollars a month. Water was usually fetched from the deep Christeson's well to the north in the Roubidoux bottom near the Andrew and Edna Christeson home. This was a job many students enjoyed. Usually the bucket was more full, of course, when brought back by the older students. Sometimes there was an extra reward—cookies from Edna Christeson. Claude E. Laughlin remembers placing the water in its classroom spot in the Arctic Boy with dipper for drinks during the day.

Necessary outhouses were set on the northwest side of the school. Two one-holers were always kept very clean. Plenty of catalog pages were the appropriate toilet tissue. About 1930, the WPA put in concrete foundations for the outhouses.

Sickness in the community was not often treated by a doctor. Old herbal remedies were used to treat many ailments. Sassafras tea, for example, would help purify the blood for the winter. Chest colds were treated with remedies like "skunk grease", which was similar to Vick's Vaporub. More serious problems were taken to Doctor Page, fourteen miles to the south in Bloodland. Doctor Tablot could be found in Waynesville for major injuries.

Learning was a top priority at Cedar Hill School. Grades one through eight were all in the same room, with the teacher many times instructing older students, who help the younger ones. On Friday afternoons, if students were well behaved that day, math matches, spelling bees, or geography competition would commence. The big geography book doubled as an instrument suitable for immediate discipline.

Dramatic performances were set up in front with sheets being suspended by safety pins on a wire to make stage curtains.

Lunchtime meant students had to get their lunch buckets with the likes of cornbread and milk, mustard sandwiches, and other staples brought from home. Recess involved running playing the fox and goose game around the U-shaped stack of cord wood, or a game of "stinkbase." "Stinkbase" was a favorite tag game played on the open spot just south of the school house. Ball games were played on the same open space. Eugene Wilson remembers the teeter-totter. As students chased each other around in play, one child hit the board of the teeter totter. As the board swivelled on the log base, it once hit Eugene on the cheek, leaving a lasting impression he can show today.

The operation of the country schools

was fairly simple. There were three or four community men on the school board, which was under the jurisdiction of the county superintendent. The school board was actually in charge of hiring the teacher. Carroll Underwood and then Ol Thompson held that job in the late 1930's. The inspection by the county superintendent was a big thing. Everybody got busy to polish and spruce up the school house.

There appears to have been over twenty one-room school houses in Pulaski County in the early 1900's. That means there were several reputable teachers handling education duties. Teachers remembered from the Cedar Hill School include Arlo Brown, Viola Digro, Virgie Atteberry, John Ichord, Altha Mc Laughlin, Don Sparks, and Belle Wilson.

Pie suppers were held for recreation and when extra money was needed. Pies were auctioned off to the men, who then got to eat with the women bakers of the pies.

On Sunday, Cedar Hill School became the local church. In 1930, Jeretta Laughlin and Belle Wilson helped to start the project. Charlie Roach set up a two week revival to initiate services. After that, a traveling preacher would stop by, sometimes with a weekend session. On Sunday after-

noons, fish fries were common. Fishing, lining, and even seining brought in a good catch. Rocks would be placed and the fire started while black iron frying pans and plenty of lard were brought out. Many times a wagon sent to Waynesville brought back a huge ten cent block of ice and a dozen lemons. Fresh lemonade and ice cream were real treats. This neighborhood gathering involved plenty of food, swimming, and socializing by all.

Other non-school community happenings included "tacky parties," where everyone gathered wearing mismatched or unusual items. Louise Garzelli remembers the teacher, Belle Wilson, wearing 14 button shoes to win the best award. Dances also took place at Cedar Hill School.

The school year was short, releasing students in April in time to prepare fields and to do planting. 1940 was the last year for Cedar Hill School, as the family's land was bought out and the army moved in. Today, this whole area of land is basically vacant of structures. Cedar Hill Cemetery, found just north of the Cedar Hill School foundation, is still in place with mostly Christeson family gravestones. Although there are occasional army operations in Section 36, former home of Cedar Hill School, howling coyotes mostly have it all to themselves.



Highway 17 before it was paved. Photo Courtesy of John Bradbury



Cave Lodge, Schlicht, Mo.

Photo Courtesy of John Bradbury



Old Academy in Lebanon.



Cave Lodge, Schlicht, Mo.

Photo Courtesy of John Bradbury