

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Historical notes from Big Butte Historical Society
Recollections of Charleen Brown

From time to time, people ask if Butte Falls has changed much over the years. The answer is yes and no. The general lay-out as platted by Bert Harris in 1906 remains intact but many subtle changes have taken place over the years. To illustrate these changes, we will take a look back at Butte Falls in 1945, as recalled through the eyes of an 8 year old, even though these memories may have dimmed with the passing years.

The main entrance into town has changed only a little. Broad Street still crosses the cattle guard but the railroad tracks, that once crossed at what is now the road to the sewer plant, are gone. There was a big brown house on the right and then the grade school. Today, the house is gone and there is a modern elementary school building where the old building stood.

But, in 1945 when I enrolled in the 3rd grade, the school was a beautiful, white, 2-story building with a bell tower. A wide concrete sidewalk led up to an impressive entrance with big double doors and lots of windows. When one entered the building through those double doors, there was a wide foyer. On the wall at one side of the door was a hook that held the rope for the school bell. Every morning, noon and afternoon the "janitor" would pull that rope and ring the bell, signaling the start or end of classes. Continuing on, there were 2 or 3 steps up to a wide, open landing with 2 doors on the right and 2 on the left. Along the walls between those doors were coat hooks and benches for sitting while removing boots or maybe a "time out" if necessary. The classroom for first and second grades was on the right and on the left was the classroom for third and fourth grades. Yes, two grades in one room. Straight ahead was a wide, rather imposing staircase that led up to another landing and then on up to the second floor. As you topped the stairs, the classroom for the fifth and sixth grades was on the right and the seventh and eighth grades on the left. Somewhere in the upper level was the Principal's office where none of us ever wanted to visit.

When you entered a classroom, you would find rows of desks with attached seats on runners. Your desk was the back of the seat in front of you and your seat was the front of the desk behind you. There were round holes in the upper right corner of the desks called ink wells and most of the desks had initials scratched in their tops. When choosing a desk, one would try to find a desktop with the fewest initials because this made it easier to write without tearing your paper. The room was divided in half with students in one grade on one side and the other grade on the other side. There were big windows on two sides of the room and long "blackboards" on the other two walls. Classes were generally taught separately but we would often combine for arithmetic practice as a whole group or have arithmetic races at those "blackboards".

There was a big, round wood stove in the room for heat in the winter months. It had a wide metal barrier around it to keep children from getting too close and burning themselves. The fires must have been built each morning by the "janitor". Perhaps the stoves were filled with wood during the day to keep them going although I don't recall ever seeing that done. It could get very warm if you sat too close to the stove and rather chilly if you sat too far away. More to follow.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

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