

BAY'S MOUNTAIN
ONE OF THE LORD'S GREAT CREATIONS



by

ODELL HARBOUR DEPEW

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Chris Perry, photographer

Odell Harbour Depew

A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Familiar to residents of Kingsport is the Bays Mountain Reservoir which at one time furnished city water. The reservoir covers land where a school once stood - a little white one-room school-house in a clearing surrounded by pine trees.

In her book THE EARLY YEARS ON BAYS MOUNTAIN, Muriel Spoden mentions some of the teachers who taught there before the reservoir dam was built in 1916. One of them was Miss Harbour who later became Odell Harbour Depew.

Today, at 81, she likes to recall those days. "We were happy," she says.

She taught grades one through eight. Although class went smoothly most of the time, she remembers one exception and tells how she handled it.

This story she has written about the children, the mountain, the people and their customs mirrors Odell Harbour Depew's faith that "The Lord does wonders with little things."

Ruth Domin
Palmer Room
Kingsport Public Library

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THE MOUNTAIN AND THE SCHOOL

When we hear anyone speak of Bay's Mountain, we think of what it used to be like. There is quite a difference between the Bay's Mountain of yesterday and the one we are talking about today.

At that time there were homes up there, a mill where corn was ground into meal, and a school house which was used for both school and church, and was known as Bay's Mountain School.

I am telling you some personal experiences. I was involved in them is the reason I know they are true. I had a sister who married and lived on property they owned over there. I was small and every time my sister, Mary (Mrs. Noah Fincher), came to visit us I had to go home with her and stay a few days. During the time I was visiting her,

she had to go to the grocery store. There were no stores over there, so we had to walk out and come to Mr. E. P. Easley's grocery store, located on what is known now as the Reservoir Road. We would take the day for it. Sometimes we would stop on the way home and have lunch with some good neighbor who had prepared a hot lunch for us. We enjoyed it all so much: the walk, the lunch, the visit with people along the way. It was a long walk, but the happiness it gave us made up for the long walk and work we had getting there.

After I grew up, I was called to teach my first school on top of Bay's Mountain. It was a one-teacher school. I had all eight grades. I enrolled 21 students, and had an average daily attendance of 14. The students were all so happy and so nice. I never had any trouble with but one student, one time. This pertained to discipline.

I had told them they couldn't do something (don't remember what it was, it has been so long ago) and one of the girls said she was going to do it anyway. I said, "If you do I will whip you." She lived almost in sight of the school house, so she said she would go home. I was young and that being my first school, I didn't know much about discipline. I told her I would go after her. So when she did go home, I sent one of the boys across the road to cut me a switch. I went right on up the road and when the children saw I meant it, they all followed me. Well, we got up to a sharp curve in the road and there sat my girl. She thought I wouldn't come after her. But I did. I whipped her in the road and she said she wouldn't come back to school any more. I wondered how her parents would feel or how they would take it all. That was on Friday. And Monday morning I was anxious to get to school early and see who came, she or her parents.

When I got there she was about the first one I saw, and she was just as nice as she could be. I never had any more trouble with her.

Well, the children all being taken care of, we had to have some heat to keep us warm. For fuel we used wood in a wood-stove. We could use wood cut in two-foot lengths. The stove was placed about two-thirds ($2/3$) of the way between the front door and the stage.

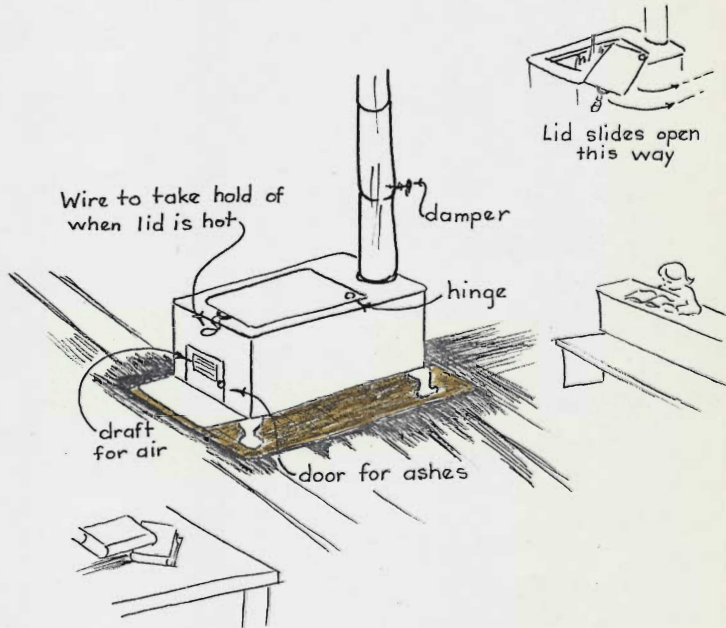
As to the lighting situation, our lights were kerosene lamps. We had table lamps, lamps for the stage and wall lights, both plain and reflector.

In regard to storms, I can remember seeing some real dark clouds, but I never remember a black-out. If there had been one, I suppose we would have lighted our lamps.

As for water, we went across the road to a

spring flowing from under a big tree. And it was so cold we didn't need any ice. It seemed that the Lord had just made this spot especially for a church and school.

WOOD STOVE



"....we had to have some heat
to keep us warm..."

BACK THEN

When I think of the difference in the times back then and now, I am made to wonder why the reason for it all. People all worked hard but everyone seemed so happy and now people have good jobs, nice homes and everything so convenient, and still they are not happy, that is, many of them are not. They are still looking for something else.

I forgot to mention the fuel bill, or say how much I was paid a month for teaching. I received thirty dollars (\$30.00) per month plus two dollars (\$2.00) for fuel, making thirty-two (\$32.00) for my labor. That was something.

I have said many times since, that I feel like I accomplished more that first year in teaching than I did when I went into schools where I had two or three grades. The children were all inter-

ested in learning to do math, read, write and spell and get the real subjects for an education.

There were no doctors living in the mountain, so if anyone got sick someone had to ride to Church Hill and bring a doctor. They went, not knowing if the doctor would be at home or not, or if he was out on a long call that was serious and required much attention, or if he would even come.

The people who lived on Bay's Mountain took care of their loved ones when they passed away. There were two or three cemeteries up there, where many of their loved ones are sleeping. I can name some of them, but not all. Cleve and Orgie Gragg are buried there.

BAY'S MOUNTAIN SCHOOL



"It seemed that the Lord had just made this spot especially for a church and school."

THE KNOB

There was what they called a 'Knob' running down through the valley dividing the property. People who were living on the west side were Feagins, Rogers, Simpsons. Their land went on down and joined the land owned by people on the east side who were Ledbetter, Finchers, Quillens, and McClures. The oldest children in the Feagin family were Bertie Conkin, Clofa, Carrie and Fitzhugh. I don't remember the names of the others. In the Ledbetter family there were Veston, Kelly, Ollie, Irvin, Blanche, Sallie, Alonzo, John and Benny. In the Quillen family there were Eva, Ida, Annie, Lavada, Chris, John, George, Rose and Edna. Then there was the Perry family with two or three members.

In the out-lying areas of Bay's Mountain, there were several churches. There was one which

I especially remember. It was Solomon's Temple. We always had our revival meeting, beginning the first Sunday in August, and we always met for two weeks. We had two services daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Many of us who had quite a ways to walk would take our lunch and just stay at the church. We would have people at the altar praying, who would be saved during that noon time. The women of the neighborhood would do as much of their canning, making kraut and butter making as they could before the meeting started. Rev. Elbert Melear was our pastor, and no one wanted to miss a service, so they got ready for it.

If the people would follow the example of their ancestors and tell their children about their forefathers and the kind of lives they lived, what a wonderful place Bay's Mountain would be. It is one of the Lord's great Creations.

RETIREMENT

My last year of teaching was nineteen fifty-seven (1957) at Sullivan Elementary. When time came for retirement, I was handicapped, so to speak. Our records, which are kept in Blountville our county seat, had all been destroyed, so we had more problems to solve. Our superintendent told me to go into each community where I had taught and get two people who were good, honest Christian people, dependable and trustworthy in what they said and did, and have them sign an affidavit that I had taught at those schools, and that would be all I would need. So I had the pretty picture of doing that.

It all worked out alright, but there is one episode I cannot pass without relating to you. I had talked to some former students about signing

the paper and they said they would. But when we showed one lady where to sign her name, she said, "I can't write." You can imagine what a teasing I got over that. She had been in the hospital with a nervous break-down, which we didn't know anything about. We were so sorry when we heard about it.

There had been many changes on Bay's Mountain since I taught there in 1915. As I told you in the beginning, there is quite a difference between the Bay's Mountain of yesterday and the one we know today.

Odell Harbour Depot

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