

TOWNSHIP TOPICS

HISTORY OF SCOTCH PLAINS SCHOOLS (Continued from last issue)

Now let us go back to the original Baptist Church Society School. This building was used until 1871. Sometime early in the nineteenth century the town took over the operating of the school. The Board of Education, judging from the minutes, met at frequent intervals in various homes, the village store and even on one occasion in the Post Office - details were few and apparently the business was transacted in short order. Finally in 1871 through an arrangement with the Baptist Church, the old school and land were returned to the church in consideration of a plot on the corner of Grand and Union. Here the old Baptist Church building was moved and after some alterations became the school. The first classes met here on October 18, 1871.

This school surpassed the old one in many respects. The school records indicate that it was furnished with both single and double desks. The teacher's desk was the best that could be bought, although its cost could not exceed \$13.50. The school was heated by a furnace which was quite a modern improvement. Even a plank sidewalk enhanced the appearance of the building.

When the school opened, there were 107 children registered but attendance was very poor - thirty-nine pupils came for four months, twelve came for six months and only four pupils completed the full term of eight months. Even after the passage of the free school law of 1878 attendance was no better. The Trustees urged the parents to come to school to discuss school problems - they suggested that this would be better than "sitting around the local store discussing school matters from hearsay."

Children too were the source of some trouble. The minutes of the Board report the suspension of a boy for "being constantly noisy and disrespectful and particularly for drawing an indecent picture on the board and with boldness and evident satisfaction acknowledging it as his work when questioned by his teacher."

By 1889 we find that this building, too, began to show its age - the heating and ventilating system were in such a state that we find, "the voters have been called together for the simple reason we are convinced that the present building cannot be used for school purposes another winter." A special meeting was called for June 3, 1889, to consider the question of selling "the present schoolhouse and grounds and purchase a site and erect and furnish a new school house thereon." Dr. J. Ackerman Coles addressed this meeting as follows:

"Permit me to say that I hope our present meeting will be a harmonious one. Let bygones be bygones. Let us respect the proprieties of discussion and debate, avoiding strife and bitterness and laying aside, as far as possible, all passion and prejudice, let us study those things which make for peace. Let us address ourselves with calm

ness and candor to the business of the evening having arrived at the conclusion that a new school house is demanded, . . . the question arises, Where shall it be located? The people of the growing section of Fanwood naturally enough and properly enough, consider that some respect should be paid to their convenience, and in looking about, it has been thought that as eligible location as any and one likely to be particularly acceptable to the Fanwood people would be a point on a plot of ground situated on Park Avenue and Westfield Road."

The meeting approved the project and plans for the building were drawn by architects White (Stanford White) and Meade. The original building constructed for a cost of \$18,000 was a two-story structure and contained five rooms, an auditorium and principal's office. The building was completed by May 24th, 1890 - at which time a program was held. Dr. Abraham Coles, father of J. Ackerman Coles, wrote a five-verse poem to commemorate the occasion. The last verse of this poem, "Now Nature Wakes from Slumber," is quoted:

"Dear Children, to me listen!
This song is meant for you:
Your eyes with pleasure glisten,
For life is new to you;
This is your time for sowing,
Your seed-time and your spring -
O, may you e'er be growing
In every noble thing."

SERVICE BRIEFS

PARENTS HEAR HOW HARRY STOCKER DIED AT GUADALCANAL.

The parents of Scotch Plains' first war casualty, Harry E. Stocker, fireman, first class, U. S. Navy, heard from the lips of Harry's shipmate Richard Burlison, S 2/C of Portland, Oregon, just what happened when the young Scotch Plains seaman was killed.

According to Burlison, the destroyer on which he and Harry were serving, a lead ship in a convoy, was ploughing through the South Pacific on August 7th, 1942, when the convoy was attacked by Jap planes. Bombs fell thick and fast and a direct hit got young Stocker, killing him immediately.

Later, the young sailor said, Stocker was buried at sea with full military honors, including Catholic rites by the chaplain aboard ship.

Each of the boys had promised the other that the first to reach home would call on the other's family and it is in the fulfillment of this promise that Seaman Burlison is visiting with Harry's parents.

PVT. MACK SPEEDS UP HOME PRODUCTION FRONT

Pvt. Richard B. Mack of 2412 Mountain Ave. decided recently while on furlough from the military front to give the home production front a lift and for nine out of the fifteen days of his furlough, he worked at a machine at the Bound Brook Oilless Bearing Co.

Are some of you New Guinea correspondents in a quandary as to what to write to The Plainsman about? Tell us then if there is anything to this story we picked up from our New York artist friend. According to him, the natives in New Guinea hold weekly celebrations which begin at sundown Saturday night and continue until sun-up Sunday morning, after which time the natives sleep until sun-up Monday. This allows them time to digest their feast of roast pig, (No ration points needed, just bows and arrows) and to rest up after the enervating ordeal of the dance. As we interpret the last part of the previous sentence, it means they sleep off a hangover from their Saturday night binge. We just HAD to introduce this story so that we could use the sketch our artist friend made.



SO. PACIFIC NATIVES SLEEP OFF
SATURDAY NIGHT BINGE

Lt. (J.g.) James V. Lott, who lived in Fanwood for many years but now owns a house in Scotch Plains and who enjoys listing on both the Fanwood and Scotch Plains Honor Rolls, has completed training at the Roanoke Va. Naval Transitional School operated by the Penn-Central Airlines and has qualified as a pilot for transport type Navy aircraft. Jim holds the distinction of having written the first service letter received by The Scotch Plainsman.

S 1/C Alvin Bender of Longfellow Ave. is enrolled in the Fleet Service School at Norfolk, Va., after a trip to sea.

Eugene L. Harvey, S 2/C, recently was transferred from Camp Robert Smalls, Great Lakes, Ill., to Hampton, Va., Yeoman's Training School, for advanced special training.

PVT. W. B. BIDDULPH MISSING IN ITALY.

A few days after Mr. and Mrs. John Biddulph, of 39 Plainfield Ave., had received word of an Army press release that their son Walter had spent a five-day leave in Rome, they received a telegram from the War Department reporting that he has been missing in action in Italy since Sept. 28.

Just before his visit to Rome Walter narrowly escaped injury when he stepped on a trip wire of a discarded mine which exploded and struck him in the chest. A cigaret lighter in his pocket saved him from injury.

He was wounded in action May 18 in Italy, and also participated in the North African campaign. He has been awarded the Purple Heart, two Bronze Battle Participation Stars, the Mediterranean Theater Ribbon and the Good Conduct Medal.

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