During the “Dark Ages” of 1928 I started my teaching career in a one room rural school. This first year had many happy events as well as some dark ones.

One incident that is still vivid in my mind that really could have been a disaster happened in October as we were about to give our Halloween program. This was an event the community really enjoyed as well as the youngsters and was attended by all the surrounding farmers and their families.

In 1928 the school had no electric lights or any modern means at all. The school did have a large gas lamp, which we thought gave a very good light if all went well. The fragile mantle and correct pressure in the gas chamber had to be handled with skill.

Arriving early at the school this special evening to get everything in readiness for the program was very important. Some of the older boys came early to lend a hand. They worked hard to lay the planks for the stage so they would not squeak or jiggle too much when trampled by the many nervous feet. There was also a sort of eerie feeling around the room after we lit the candles in a few pumpkins to decorate the room.

The next thing was to get the gas lamp lit which sat on top of a partition that separated the cloak hall from the schoolroom. Joe and Jim, with the help of a ladder got the lamp lit and at about the same time someone opened the outside door causing a blast of air to blow against the mantle on the lamp, which then flared up in a flame hitting the ceiling. For a moment I was frantic as well as were the boys but for some unknown reason the flame died out and so did the light, leaving us in a pretty spooky looking room! What were we to do? Time was going fast! There were no neighbors but then by luck and chance a farmer and his family came early carrying a bright and shining gas lantern that really lit up the room after it was hung up on a peg by the side of the stage.
EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING

ELSIE CHELL

While teaching in a state college we were asked to help students make out their programs each quarter. I had been there only one quarter so was not well known. I sat listening to one young man while he was trying to make a decision on one course. He said, “This Social Studies Methods Course is very good but very, very rough and time consuming. You have to make lesson plans and units and even teach them in class. This is good because you learn a lot but you have to make your units because you can’t borrow them since no one around has made out such.”

After much pondering and my listening he finally decided to take the course so he put it on his program. You should have seen the expression on his face when on Monday morning at eight o’clock, I walked into the classroom. Obviously, he sat in a daze trying to remember what he had said.

TEACHING EXPERIENCES

RUTH DANIELSON

My first three years of teaching at the same school (Pleasant Dale) are most memorable. The first year I had forty-two pupils in grades 1-8 with six boys as tall and taller than I was. This at age 20. I was also janitor and cleaning woman. But we made it a fun party, scrubbing floors once a month and popping corn and making candy and taffy with the older ones helping. The discipline was my biggest problem that year but after a few months of patience and praise I had most of them on my side. To this day several former pupils reminisce with the former Miss Jackson when we meet. I have many fond memories of this community, meetings and programs and where the teacher had an invitation to every family for a home cooked meal.
I began my teaching career during the 1920 depression. Teaching positions were at a premium but I was fortunate enough to get a rural school, although it was in one of the poorest areas of our county. Often I opened my lunch to find a lard sandwich and unsweetened applesauce so when I got home on weekends my stomach was happy for just plain food.

For the Valentine week I brought back candy bars for my eighteen students plus a few extra. A snow storm blocked the roads on Thursday and Friday which included the holiday party. In fact only one child made it to the school so what did I do with the candy bars???? I ate them!

In September a little second grade boy, whose father was engaged in the lumbering business, reported to his mother about the members of his class. It was after the first day of school. He informed her that one of his group of the previous year had returned to the first grade room and after his mother tried to give him a supposedly logical reason for this, the boy in lumbering language said, “Well, I think she is one of those rejects.”

Before school was in session one morning, a bit of news was volunteered, by a second grader, “My father is going to have an operation! I responded by saying, “That’s too bad! What’s your father’s trouble? The child responded, “He has some of them there rocks in his stomach.”

Another time a first grade boy of Indian heritage said, “Teacher, Susie called me a name! I said, “Do you want to tell me what she said?” The boy answered in an abused tone, “She called me Chocolate!”
A big frightening surprise stared at me one early cold morning in January before
dawn as I walked into my school room and discovered my kindling was gone,
waste paper baskets were empty and the big chunks of stove wood was gone,
which I had placed in readiness the evening before.

Then it dawned upon me that someone had made himself comfortable and warm
for his nights lounging! I was still more relieved to think he had vacated the
building before I arrived.

My second thought was to search for enough paper scraps and kindling to get
the fire started and carry in more wood from the outside woodshed to fill the big
heater in order to have the room warm by 9 o’clock.

The tramp never made another appearance but my kind old landlord felt sorry for
me so he offered to build the fires for me until the weather became warmer and
the days were longer.

Another frightful experience that first year of my teaching was the wolves that
would run and howl around the home where I lived. I was the only one who had
a bedroom downstairs.

In spite of all, I enjoyed my three years in this community and often think about
these former students.
Sixteen years of my career in education in Wisconsin were spent in Burnett County where I was employed as the County Supervising Teacher. Each spring I administered standardized reading tests to the first graders in all of the county schools. When I arrived at one of the smaller schools in a more remote area of the county, the teacher explained that Jane, one of her first grade girls was terrified about taking the test and would not come to school that day.

As the family lived just one mile from the school, I decided to make a home call. I learned from the mother that Jane was fearful about taking the test as she thought that clips would be put in her ears. She had seen clips placed in the ears of the cattle when tuberculin testing was done. Jane recognized me from earlier visits to her school. I assured her that there were no clips used in this test. She returned to school with me and completed the test with the other first graders and showed no signs of fearfulness.