

Balsam Grove School and area Community center, Hagerman Twsp.

The first settlers moved into this area from 1869 on. Their names we have are as follows: William M. Tully, George Manson, Taylors, Becketts, Bayne, Quinns, Neelys, Carely, Irwins, and Nicksons, all settled along a bush trail, which later became a gravel road.

At this time the place had no name, and the coming of these new settlers made the building of a school necessary. A half acre of thickly covered balsam bush was donated by George Manson, the only cost being for registering of the deed.

The logs were cut and hewn by the men of the community, and the building was done by a series of Bees. The school equipment consisted of benches only. The children sat with their slates on their knees.

A social evening was held among the neighbours to celebrate the opening of the school and to choose a suitable name. Balsam Grove was suggested by Mr. Armstrong of McKellar, who chaired the meeting. This building was also used for the Church services and any socials the settlers put on to raise funds for the organizations which became active in the future years.

On the first School Board were Mr. James Manson, Mr. Wm. Tully and Mr. John Quinn. They hired the first teacher Miss Taylor, who received \$200. She only taught for two months, as this was all the board could afford then. Later on the settlers became more aggressive and increased the money and had the school opened for eleven months. After this term it was cut to ten months as it now is.

The subjects most emphasized were: reading, writing, and Arithmetic. The older children were only allowed to go to school in the winter time or slack months on the farms. A goodly number of them were almost grown up before they had any learning in this decade.

Improvements were made as time went on at Balsam Grove School. The first desks were made by John Tully, and the black board was painted lumber, and the chalk used then was in big chunks.

This school was destroyed by fire, and in 1906 a frame school building was built by John McKewen of McKellar. The equipment for the new school consisted of factory made double seated desks. Pictures on the wall and a cupboard for the library books. There were window shades and an organ for the Church in one corner, which was often used for other entertainments as well. In 1930 slate blackboards were introduced.

Miss Gardner a teacher at this time persuaded the board to increase the grounds to a whole acre. After the land was cleared, she and the children planted trees and shrubs, current bushes and flowers to beautify the grounds. In the back part of the grounds the children grew vegetables which were shown at the first Fall Fair ever held in the District, and took many prizes.

Some years later when Mrs. Norman Quinn, (nee Iva Groh) was the teacher Hot lunches became the thing in winter. The children often used some of their home canned garden vegetables from the school garden for their lunches. The teacher supplied the pot, masher, salt, pepper and spoon for the cooking job, which the children took turns at

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