

# School Days: *A History of "Miss Florence's" teaching career*

1933-1976

*The following was written just prior to her retirement in 1976:*

Forty-three years ago last September, I started my teaching career in a one room school house. I went there, armed with my temporary certificate based on three months training in Murfreesboro, to teach everything from first through the eight grade. Located in Payne's Cove, it was attended by children from all the surrounding farm country. They came bringing their lunches in tin buckets to sit from "can" to "can't" to listen to the "fount of knowledge" I was so certain I could impart. I've never been so certain since. One thing that stands out in my memory regarding my tenure at Payne's Cove School is the bull who roamed the country side, bellowing and pawing. Terrified, I had to dodge him on my two-mile walk from the affluent farm house (where I was boarded for \$12.00 per month), to the school. I'm sure it was this bull who influenced my decision to move to Hobbs Hill later in the year when that school was opened and a teacher was needed there.

It was in the depth the depression and my \$45.00 per month salary on paper had no money to back it up. If we were lucky, someone with t little money and a lot of faith would buy the school warrants at a 10 percent discount. Somehow we managed, and even had fun. Money bought much more. You could buy an outfit for ten dollars, including \$1.98 for new shoes.

There were many young teachers who like me, worked all school year,. Then borrowed the money to go back to college over the summer in order to renew our certificates for the fall. Eventually we got permanent certificates and some of us continued to go on until we got degrees.

I stayed at Hobbs Hill two years, then went to Freemont for two years. Staying two or three years in each, place I taught at Tatesville, Mt. Vernon, then came home to Altamont. I remember once in the early years at Altamont, I enrolled around one-hundred pupils in the first four grades. I pieced the register by pasting an extension on it to add the names of all those children. We took up at eight o'clock and taught until everyone had completed a class. We got a third teacher later. You know, interestingly enough, I don't remember anyone complaining. There was a job to be done and we did it. The children worked hard and were patient. I don't recall any major behavior problem. Going to school was a privilege and most all appreciated the opportunity. Our students, whose grandchildren now ride the bus, walked three and four miles to school.

I continued to teach at Altamont until World War II broke out. I then decided to join the WACC to "see the world." I was promised by the recruiters I could teach abroad. When I got to Ft. Oglethorpe, Ga., I was put in an office testing and grading the soldiers, with no hope for a change. I didn't stay when the WACC became part of the

regular army. If you stayed or joined at that time, you were in for the duration of the war – plus six months. The Japanese War Lords were talking about another Hundred Years War. I surely didn't want to be in for that long!

Just before leaving the WACC, I married March 20, 1942 to Thomas B. Scruggs who was also a soldier. He was also discharged soon after our marriage. We lived in Chattanooga and I taught at Daisy Elementary. We later moved to Oak Ridge and I taught the first grade for a number of years there. My daughter Susan was born there in 1947.

Shortly after Susan was born, we came back to Altamont and I have taught in the capacity of first grade teacher and a few years as principal here ever since. I have taught three generations at Altamont (mother, daughter, son) and can truthfully say that I have enjoyed it all. My daughter Jennifer was born in 1956.

After completing my B.S., I began work on my Master's degree, but failed to finish at the time as my husband had a first heart attack, which led to fatal attack in 1969.

Jenny and I live alone in a rambling old house next door to Altamont School. There is a well-traveled path leading from our front door to the door of the school. Jenny now attends Middle Tennessee State University and is majoring in Special Education. My daughter Susan attended the University of Tennessee and completed her degree in Secondary Education Mathematics. Susan is married and has two children. She does not teach, although I expect her to some day.

There have been many changes in education in the four plus decades I have been teaching, but basically it is the same. You teach children, watch them grow, and feel that they are part yours forever.

Nest May the school bells will ring for me no more. I am retiring. I shall miss it: Chalk dust, rebellion, recess, operettas, but most of all "Children's faces looking up holding wonder like a cup."

Postscript:

Nearly 20 years since her retirement, "Miss Florence," who is now almost 84 years young, continues to live in her rambling old house next door to the old Altamont School. She enjoys hearing from her former students and takes as much pride as apparent in their accomplishments. Truly, she feels that these former students are essentially her treasured "children" forever.