

# ected For The New School Year!



The following stories were inspired by the Festival Players production of *Schoolhouse*. The authors each received tickets to the play. Thanks for the memories and stay connected...

## Christmas concert

School Christmas concerts were much looked forward to in rural communities. The customary schoolroom platform usually held the teacher's desk, standing space for Arithmetic drills, Spelling Bees and the "Go to the corner" place. At Christmastime it became a stage.

Through December, older pupils practiced their lines for the school play, younger ones re-read poems to memorize and the youngest acted out pantomimes and drills. As well, each pupil was mindful of keeping his desk tidy as it would be a sitting place for family members on Christmas Concert night.

This year, of the 1950s, the concert was to be on Friday evening at Jackson Falls School, Black Creek. On my opening of the school door on the preceding Wednesday I was greeted by two gaping holes. They were deep

and wide enough to accommodate two chemical toilets to be installed during the Christmas Break. Someone had jumped the bell!

Desks and lessons were nudged aside and the front platform became the centre of activity.

Marilyn and Brenda took their places to prompt the speaking parts of those in the play "An Official Visit" with Mary as the Teacher and Bob as the Inspector. Doug mastered his recitation "Twas the Night Before Christmas." The Junior pantomime of "Santa's Visit" with Kenny and Billie gave promise of repeated encores.

I was assured by the South Marysburgh School trustee that all would be back in place by Friday. It was - and our concert went down well, as did our shiny new toilets.

-Dorothy Brooks

## Smoked!

A one-room schoolhouse full of smoke meant freedom to both my older brother Dennis and I. Freedom as a result of complete cancellation of the school for the whole day. All pupils would be set free and return home.

In the early 1950s Dennis and I were the custodians/janitors at S.S. #4 North Marysburgh School located adjacent to Lake-On-The-Mountain. Duties each morning at 7 a.m. included sweeping the floor, cleaning the chalk brushes/dusting and stoking the old box stove with wood the only source of heat in the school. The stove was located near the rear of the school where the pipes hung near the ceiling connected to the chimney near the front.

Every April after the ice began to melt the muskrats emerged from hibernation in the nearby lake. Since

we were early fur traders pelts (hides) could be sold for \$4 each in 1952. (not so today)

In expectation of setting more traps (we needed more time) which meant catching more muskrats resulting in earning more cash we cleverly concocted a devious plan.

The old stove was loaded with plenty of logs and the flames were very bright.

Precisely at 8:15 a.m. the damper in the stove pipe directly above the stove was shut off. This action resulted in the school room being completely engulfed in dense smoke within a short period of time.

Upon the teacher's arrival at 8:45 a.m. she concluded that either the stovepipes or the chimney were plugged with soot. The local school trustees must be notified to clear the obstruction.

Since most mothers in the '50s worked at home the whole school (35 pupils) exited jubilantly at 9 a.m. Ironically Dennis and I travelled to the lake with extra traps/hip rubber boots for the whole day. This enabled us to set more traps in anticipation making more money.

For the next two years this was a common occurrence at S. S. #4. Fortunately for us the teacher never caught on!

-Herb Cooper

**P** rince Edward Driving School

Course starts Wed., Sept. 9  
For info: Call 613-848-6046 or 613-476-2710