

# A Step Back in Time - EARLY SCHOOLS

By Bobbie Sue Shelton

## POSSUM TROT SCHOOL

The first Possum Trot School existed from 1878 to 1896. It was located in the western part of Rutherford County on a dirt road about 1½ miles south of the old dirt Franklin Road and west of the present Coleman Hill Road. The school was a one-room log building about twenty by twenty-four feet. The seats were eight feet long benches. Equally long slant-top desks about 3 ½ feet high faced the benches. The tops of the desks could be raised and the ink and copybooks could be stored inside the desk. There was usually a writing period just before noon when pupils stood and had their writing lesson. The nearest well was about ½ mile away and the building was surrounded with cedars with no other building in sight.

In 1882 Thomas Morgan Patterson came to Possum Trot to clerk in the country store and to teach in the one-room school. Sometime later he wrote to Washington, requesting a post office and suggesting a name. Because the name he proposed had already been given to a post office in Tennessee, the government gave the community the name of Patterson in 1888.

When a new road was built, the old road on which the school was located became almost abandoned. In 1896, a new school was erected west of the old Possum Trot School. This school was called Patterson School.

## PATTERSON SCHOOL

Patterson School established in 1896 and disband in 1953, was first located on the south side of the present Coleman Hill Road about ½ mile east of the Patterson Road and Coleman Hill intersection. On October 31, 1896, R. L., W. G., and Evie Pate signed a deed for two acres for a school in the 47th District of Rutherford County to J. I. Dyer, W. I. Pate and T. J. Wary, Jr., school directors. This was a one-room building with a bell tower. In 1911 or 1912, the school building was moved to its second site near the southeast corner of the intersection on land owned by W. I. Pate.

Moving the school building to its new location caused excitement in the community. Mr. Grey of Murfreesboro pulled the schoolhouse down the road with a mule. Former students remembered that nothing could deter the teacher, Mai White from teaching her classes in the school while it was being moved. By 1917 a room had been added.

In 1929 Jimmie D. Vaughan erected a modern two-room building with a kitchen. Florence Maxwell was the first cook when hot lunches began being served. Louise Maxwell also was the cook at one time. The students had to bring their own plate, cup, knife and fork to school each day. Water was drawn from an outside well, carried inside and poured into a water cooler. The school built in 1929 was converted into a home and is still used as a residence.

Patterson School had several teachers over the years. Maggie Floyd was the teacher in 1907; Minnie Floyd, in 1908; Abbey Floyd Beasley, in 1909; Mai White in about 1911. Others were Lula Tolbert, Annie Ashley, Daisy Adams Wray, Bessie Tolbert Holden, Pauline Scales, Ray Donnell, Miss Tilford, Ophelia Elam, Margaret Brandon, Georgia Lee Marable Pate, Christine Couch, Vera Maxwell, Vera Covington, Louise Beasley, Mary Carlton, Wilma Bean, Virginia Cobb, Miss Gardner and Myra McCrory Morris. Many of the teachers boarded at the homes of Molly Pate Snell and Eulalia Vaughn Patterson.

Ray Donnell, a teacher at his first school, was the basketball coach. During tournaments, the teams would played all day until, at the final game of the night, a champion was announced.

Mrs. Myra McCrory Morris, a former student returned to teach at the Patterson School soon after her graduation from State Teachers College in Murfreesboro in 1931 and stayed until the school was closed in 1953 Miss McCrory, a single lady at the time, boarded with the Robert Patterson family when she began her teaching career at Patterson. Mrs. Morris was a respected disciplinarian by her former students. One former student, Buddy Pate, principal of Eagleville School, remembers one day during the last year at Patterson School, the students all agreed that the next day, they would dress as cowboys and bring their cap guns to



Mrs. Myra McCrory Morris

school. Mrs. Morris confiscated all their play guns and didn't let them have them back till the end of the school year. After the school closed at the end of the 1952-53 school year, Mrs. Morris taught the following year at Middleton School. In 1954, she came to Eagleville School, replacing Mr. D. L. Manier, who had retired. Mrs. Morris retired from Eagleville School in 1970. Mrs. Morris was the mother of Joann Shelton of Eagleville.

In the early school years some of the children often rode ponies to school and kept them in a barn on the property. They would bring corn from home to feed their ponies at noon. Many of the students walked several miles to school. A lot of the students had chores to do before they even came to school in the mornings.

Some of the early family names of students were; Watson, Snell, Morris, Hill, Pate, Patterson, Windrow, Jordan, Maxwell, Heaton, Neal, Frost, White, Wilson, Lamb, Dyer, Barnes, Ghee, and Wray.

The last class in 1952-53 had thirteen students, six grades and one teacher. Most of the students transferred to Eagleville School. The last students were: Annette Ralston (Chick), Edwina Anderson (Cundiff), Ronald Ralston, David Ralston, Butch Hewitt, Patty Deford, Tommy Scruggs, Charles Scruggs, Sammie Scruggs, Buddy Pate, Mary Ann Pate (Langley), Marvin King, and Roy Mears (?).

On July 9, 1955 the Rutherford County School Commission deeded to R. H. Patterson the two acres of school property.

## STUDENTS AT PATTERSON SCHOOL



**1st Row:** Raymond Pate, Grady Patterson, John Hill, Howard Thomas, Sammy Watson, Edward Hawkins, Grady Thomas, Thomas Patterson, Bill Patterson, James Hill, Thomas Hill, Hershey Wray, Williams Wray.

**2nd Row:** Jesse Morris, Ruby Hill, Usia Pate, Ruby West, Mary Carlton (Ralston) Teacher, Myra McCrory (Morris) Teacher, Georgia Snell, Gladys Morris, Thelma Watson, Willie Dyer, Jimmy D. Walls.

**3rd Row:** Georgia Lee Walls, Evie Mae Dyer, Maggie Mae Dyer, Pearl Lee Patterson, Mable Patterson, Elizabeth Patterson, Viola Pate, Elizabeth Hill, Elrie Windrow.