

NONIE'S SCHOOLHOUSE HISTORY

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After the two columns about the old Ford School, I received several phone calls and emails from readers who liked them. The last one was the best.

It was first a call from Johnny Day Mathison. Johnny is Esther Day's grandson and the great-grandson of Harry and Lena Holcomb, His mother Wynona attended the Ford School from first grade in 1934 until eighth grade in 1942, when the school closed because there were only two students — Wynona (Nonie) and Leonard Wurtz.

Following are her memories as relayed to me by Johnny:

The Ford School was the only school Nonie ever attended, and the land for the school was donated by her stepfather Ralph Day. The school was built by the community, just like the Community Hall years later. Nonie started school when she was 6 in 1934, but she can't remember what year it was built.

Her first teacher was Tommie Thompson who taught her for two years and did not come back because she got married. She was followed by Miss Bette Nicholson who also taught at Ford for two years. Her last teacher was Ruth Coan.

Both Miss Thompson and Miss Nicholson boarded with Harry and Lena Holcomb, but Mrs. Coan and her husband Bert purchased the Ballard house just north of the school and lived there.

In 1942 Nonie started the eighth grade, but as mentioned above, she and Leonard Wurtz were the only students. The school district decided they could not keep the school open and it closed — as it turned out — forever.

An interesting fact about the school. All of the windows were on the river side of the building. They were big windows to help light it, but there was a reason there were no windows on the west side facing the road.

That is because there were so few cars on the road in those days. All of the kids would jump up and run to the window when they heard a car coming.

Of course, Johnny Mathison, in addition to being a descendant of North Fork homesteaders, has a history of his own on the North Fork.

He was a horse logger for years, and lived and worked in the area. He and wife Marlene built the frame house just east of the Holcomb house, which is a North Fork landmark. They no longer live there year-round, but they still own it, and it is used by Johnny and his grown children.

Johnny purchased the Ralph Thayer homestead on Trail Creek and divided it into what was the Hubble property (now Dr. Ludden), and Ralph Thayer's cabin still stands there. Other owners today on the Thayer homestead are Ann Marie Harrod, Novaks, Brooks, and Halsey-Wilson. Time sure flies by!

Larry Wilson's North Fork Views appears weekly in the Hungry Horse News.



The old Ford School, 1937 or 1938. Bottom row, from left, Jimmy Ballard, Vincent Hensen; middle row, Leonard Wurtz, Nonie Day (Chapman), Dorothy Wurtz; back row, Bud Holcomb, Thelma Wurtz and teacher Betty Nicholson.