

# SCHOOL



*Although in some older Welsh-American settlements, education was first carried out in Welsh, this was not the case in Louisa and the neighboring counties. This caused some children who came from Welsh-speaking homes to encounter difficulties upon entering school. In America as in Wales, education was highly valued traditionally by the Welsh people because of their love for language and a respect for literacy. In Wales, particularly, education also provided the children a way out of hard labor in the fields or in the mines.*

## *The Welsh Language and School*

We were up against the English language wherever we went—at school and business.

MARIE GREENE

I had a sister that was thirteen months younger than I was. Now when I started to school, I couldn't speak English. I could only speak Welsh. When I would come home from school, if I would play house with my sister Mary Leafa for a half-hour, then she would play school with me. And so she learned English that way. I came along at a time when it was very popular to take one of the children that did well in school and put them ahead. So, even though I couldn't speak English when I started to first grade, I took first and second grade in one year. Then I went into third, and I seemed to be doing pretty well there. So they wanted me to skip third and fourth and have me go to fifth. But my folks said, no. I was a little bit young and needed to grow up a little bit. And I was shy. But I was in college when I was sixteen. GAYLE EDWARDS ROTTER

*Did your parents speak Welsh and how did that affect you at school?*

They always did, and when my sister started to school, she couldn't understand English. So then they made up their mind, right then, that it was time for them to quit talking Welsh

and go to talking English when we were around. If they were by themselves I could understand what they were talking about in Welsh. ROSELLA WILLIAMS CRAWFORD

My dad and mother spoke Welsh to themselves, but when my oldest sister, who was thirteen or fourteen years older than I was, when she went to school, she couldn't speak anything but Welsh. So when I was born, she was very insistent that I not be in that situation.

RUTH WILLIAMS GIPPLE

They [my parents] talked Welsh all the time when we were small, especially if they didn't want us to understand. I could talk it before I went to [Columbus Junction] school. And then you more or less lose it. MARIAN PUGH CECIL

Welsh was the language spoken in the home. Elgan [Edwards] started to school at seven and had to return home to learn the English language.

MARY ANN ELGAN EDWARDS, his wife, in a letter

When we went to school, we couldn't talk anything but the Welsh, nothing but. Couldn't talk nothing but Welsh when we went to school. That was hard, I'll tell you. We would get into trouble with people in our grade, but they respected us. The ones that knew Welsh, they'd get together and make fun of the others too. EDWARD GRIFFITH

I didn't feel different at all, because I spoke English when I entered school, and my brothers did, and I just didn't have the contact of someone just speaking Welsh. We just entered school the same as all the rest of them down here. DOROTHY DAVIS PLETT

[Starting school] we couldn't converse with the other kids very well. We couldn't understand what they meant. The teacher was really confused. She didn't know what we was saying. We didn't know what to do until we finally learned the English language. They were pretty good. They kinda showed us what we were supposed to do by manually getting a piece of paper or chalk. They'd hand the stuff to us, and that way we knew what. And then, follow the leader. If we had to be first, why we wouldn't know what to do, but we'd see the others doing it, and we could do what they were doing. Just like all the little children, they're like copy cats. BILL EDWARDS

We had what we called Current Events, and we got it once a week, I'm pretty sure. So one time in Current Events, there was the name of this little Welsh town with seventy-some letters in it. I was in the third grade, and I was, you might say, foolish enough to say, "Oh, I can say that word!" And the teacher says, "You can? Well, let's hear it." "Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychryndrobwilllantysiliogogoch." And that was my undoing, because she took me over the entire school, and I had to go into every room and pronounce the name of that town. GOMER OWEN

My first grade teacher, Lois Cannon, learned a lot of Welsh, because she taught for several years. She could say several things in Welsh that she just picked up from the kids.

ROSELLA WILLIAMS CRAWFORD

I think we were about the only Welsh kids there [at Shellbark school]. Well, there might be one other family that was Welsh, but the others were all English. We spoke mostly English, because they wouldn't understand us in Welsh. We always had English teachers. We didn't have any that could talk Welsh. ROSINA WILLIAMS HAWKINS

At Cotter school there were only a part that were Welsh, not a great part either. I think maybe Wyman school would have a lot more Welsh kids than we did in Cotter.

MARGARET WILLIAMS QUIGLEY

Everybody at Wyman school spoke English. My brother couldn't talk any English at all. He had trouble at first getting the teacher to know what he wanted. I was four years younger than he, and I could talk English enough to get by. I was never ashamed that I talked Welsh, but as we went to school, we kind of got away from it. But at home we still talked Welsh till I was grown up. EVERETTE DAVIS

I went to Wyman school, and it was about all English. But my father, when he and his family went to school, they went to country school, and there wasn't any of those that could talk English. Stanley, they called the school, and it was on the county line of Washington and Louisa County, a mile straight west of us and a half-mile north. And there was a school called Lincoln that was west of Salem church. There was a lane that went to the north there. I don't know just where it was located on that lane. My dad went to Stanley, and the Reeses went to Lincoln. Rosina [Williams] went to Shellbark. That was down east. DONALD DAVIS

My grandfather [Alfred Davis] went to Young America [school] which was down south from the church and then past my grandma and grandpa's road to the blacktop and left, there's an old cemetery on a little hill and right across from that, on the side of the road, was a little school house. You can see where it had to have been. Then they stopped having that school because they built the brick building at Wyman. One of the schools is still standing. It must be Shellbark. TIFFANY HOGUE

When I started [at Young America school] one other girl and I were having a little, well, not very much, difficulty, but the English language wasn't as easy for us as some of the others, simply because we didn't hear it as much. I remember that the teacher would have us get up in front of the class and speak to each other in Welsh just so that they could hear it. And they thought it was so odd to hear another language. The other girl was much better at speaking than I was. She was Louise Humphreys. [Our teacher] was definitely Swedish, Davidson. NORMA WHITHAM

I knew very little English when I started to school at Columbus City grade school on the

southeast corner of town where there is a welding and maintenance shop now. Edith Blanchard was a very good teacher. I had her for the first three grades. There was no kindergarten then.

MARIE GREENE

Mother finished eighth grade at Yankeetown school and went back two or three years after to help the teacher. IRENE THOMAS MORROW

I just hate it we never kept on [with the Welsh language]. When I started to school I couldn't say one word of English. I had three brothers and two sisters but none of those could [speak Welsh]. You know, a long time ago you didn't say you were Welsh because to go to school there wasn't enough just around Cotter there. And they'd say, "Oh, we know you're Welsh. We can tell on that old Welsh brogue." I don't think some of them have it, but I never noticed. Of course maybe I was used to it. So they [the brothers and sisters] just never took it up. My brother, oh maybe he'd say a few words, and maybe he'd know what the folks was talking about. I was around Grandpa and Grandma so much, especially Grandpa and Grandma Peters. EVELYN ARTHUR QUIGLEY

One of my classmates always said that when she started to school, she didn't know a word of English. She knew just Welsh. Her name was Eleanor Davis. She married a Davis, Alfred, and then she always spoke Welsh, because she married someone who could speak Welsh, and she kept her Welsh, but the rest of us didn't. . . . She died last year.

MARGARET WILLIAMS QUIGLEY

### *How did you get to school?*

I went to school in a horse hack for ten years. It was driven by Howard Oak, Don Oak, and Burdette Moore. They were neighborhood boys. I was there at Columbus City grade school through fifth grade, and then we came down to the grey building in Columbus Junction and into high school. MARIE GREENE

There were times when we walked over four miles to Cotter school every day. And the roads would get so bad that the horses couldn't pull the wagons. The dirt would just roll up and clog the wheels of the wagons. So my sister and I would walk. My brother happened to be nine years younger than we were, so he wasn't always in on this. We would walk a mile to the Griffiths' [Edward Griffith's folks] and pick up Edward and his sisters Eleanor and Margaret. Those were the three oldest ones. And the five of us would walk over four miles to school. Then we'd walk back that night. Then the next day. We never missed school! I didn't go to a country school. In fact, I taught in a country school, and I'd never been in one! But we had a country school right by our house, and the teacher always boarded at our house.

GAYLE EDWARDS ROTTER

Luther Davis and his brother Romie started driving the school hack when I was very small, and Glen took it up and Milt took it up. All four brothers lived at the far end, so they picked up the kids on the way to Wyman. The Bryn boys ran the school hack all the many years I went to school there. There was dirt road then. EVERETTE DAVIS

*What else do you remember about school?*

My father and Harvey Davis went to Stanley school, and they were always good friends. He and dad were related. There was a neighbor named White, and the teacher would go there for lunch. While she was gone, the kids'd have a high old time. There was a boy, quite a bit older than all the younger ones, and he was going to give a demonstration on how to put out a fire. So he had all those younger kids go out to the field and pack leaves and cornstalks in the center of the schoolhouse floor. The older boy threw a match into it, and after it started pretty good, he took his coat off and beat it out. The boys used to get corn silk, and they'd go up in the attic and smoke during the noon hour. The smoke would be coming down below the rafters. They used to go over to the White place to get their drinking water. Well, they'd send the two kids over there to get water. They'd always take as long as they could to get back. They'd start back with a bucket of water, but when they got back to school they'd only have about a fourth of a bucket left. They'd have it all splashed out. DONALD DAVIS

The Reeses, their father, worked awful hard to get a Consolidated School here at Cotter. That's when they had these gymnasiums and got playing basketball—Cotter and Wyman and Crawfordsville, Columbus Junction, Grandview. Got mixing up, and that's when the Welsh began to marry outside. LEROY OWENS