

District No. 5 of Murray

BY C.W. LATTIN

Recently this photo has come to light showing the interior of the District No. 5 schoolhouse in the Town of Murray. An accompanying exterior photo with the same children was our clue for identification. This schoolhouse, now a residence, is made of lake-washed cobblestone located on the west side of the County Line Road, a little north of the Gulf Road.

I judge the school building was built around 1850 by the style of cobblestone masonry. The class room for eight grades was only 20 some feet square. A wooden entryway was a later addition to the school which has since been removed exposing decorative cobblestone work above the front door.

As to our photo, there are several names written in pencil on the back, perhaps by a student. The names are Mary, Mabel, Charlie, Arthur and Agnes. My guess is the picture

was taken during the first decade of the 20th century. Could the children named be of the same family?

This is an interesting picture for several reasons. There are a variety of ages represented in the students with several older ones seated in the back next to the teacher. Lunch pails appear to be kept on the floor under student seats. The boy in the front to the left appears to have a fancy bow tie and dress suit on. This indicates he dressed up knowing a photographer was coming.

What really intrigues me the most is the outlandish wallpaper and corresponding border, a piece of which has become detached. Schoolhouses and country churches were often wallpapered at the time this picture was taken. In fact, wallpaper was much more commonly used in home decoration 100 years ago.

The upper right part of the photo shows a stove pipe that indicates a heating stove would have been situated in the front



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of the room, as we are seeing the back wall here. The two rear windows are covered over on the outside with board shutters. The other windows on the school were outfitted with lowered blinds.

At one time, the Town of Murray had 14 school districts as seen on the 1913 Orleans County atlas. With centralization occurring in the early 1950s the one room schoolhouses became a thing of the past.