

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



School Days

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This week it's my pleasure to present some research by the newly appointed Deputy Historian of Gaines, Janice Barnum Thaine. Her mother (Florence Bates Barnum 1885-1956) who is pictured here circa 1910 kept a small diary from which the facts of this column are gleaned. It seems that between September 1909 and June 1915 she taught school in the Historic Cobblestone School at Childs known as District #5 of Gaines. Carrying on that tradition today is her daughter Janice Thaine who conducts tours for hundreds of 4th graders from regional schools who visit the Cobblestone Complex each spring and fall.

One of the questions often posed to her is "What did they do when it snowed? If it was bad, did they close school?" Well, interestingly enough we have the answer to that question for at least one week in March of 1913.

Sunday: We went to Lee's today. The weather was a corker. Snow, blow, and cold. We started out and it wasn't too bad but it kept getting worse. We almost turned back several times. Got there after twelve. Mrs. Lee had a lovely dinner. It was her 26th birthday. On the way home we had the event of the season. Came to a snow bank that looked like a mountain it was so high. Everyone had to descend from their pedestal and scale its summit. E.E.B. (that was Everette Barnum—whom she married the next year) led the way. Betsy (his horse) followed and I came after. I went into the snow the extreme length of my lower extremities and then some. I now know just how the inside of an ice cream freezer feels. The rest of the trip was easily made and we arrived home safely. But it stormed so and Betsy was so tired that E.E.B. had to go right home. However, the baby liked her spoon and in spite of cold and storm we had a good enough time and fun enough to be worth it.

Monday: Cold and stormy. Snow is deep, deeper, deepest. Walked to school. Everything was all right for the most part. Father came and got us after school. (Her brother Fred was one of her pupils.)

Tuesday: This is my 28th birthday and such a lot of things to be glad and happy for. Guess no girl ever had more. The snow was deep and father had to take us to school. A lot of the children gave me presents and cards. Got supper, cleaned lamps, swept and dusted the house tonight as Mother is at Aunt Clara's. Walter Balcom and E.E.B. came down tonight.

Wednesday: Went to Miss Rowley's to stay all night and help her make plans for the Town of Gaines' School Field Day on July 4th. She gave me a pretty pillow for my cedar chest.

Thursday: Snow, blow, and everything that goes with a perfect hurricane. It was awful. I started to walk home but met Father by the stone house. I was wet through and through.

Friday: Road is full of snow. Got to school finally. Nearly everyone was in school today. E.E.B. came down tonight. I popped corn and made popcorn balls. We played dominoes and checkers with my brothers. It was one good happy evening. I have finally decided that I shall be satisfied if I can so live that I may be an inspiration to someone else each day to not only do their best but to live their best.

The Bates home where Florence Bates Barnum grew up, is now the residence of William Metcalf on Route 98 north of Childs.

As a special note to Janice, I'd like to say thank you for sharing your mother's experiences of long ago and her wonderful personal philosophy.