By Mabel Thompson  
*READING, RITING AND RHEMATIC*  
Part Seven

Oakland was the school most of the boys and girls attended that lived in the same neighborhood. This was the school I began my education in, and the one which my brothers attended. It was a small one room building having desks and benches enough to accommodate all the pupils who were likely to go there. This schoolhouse was located on the old stage road from Bayou Chicot to St. Landry, about a quarter of a mile from the late Duncan Tatman place, and just behind where Kent Thompson's home is located.

The Tubre family gave the land for the school about a century ago. They did this in order to have a school near enough for their children to attend. I think the only other school in existence was about four miles away. Not many years ago I understand this acre of land went back to the Tubre estate.

Probably the schoolhouse was built by the neighbors as they all were back then. It was in a grove of oak trees and on a knoll which made it a pretty location.

There was a large pond to the west of the school, but nearby, and some have told me that the boys and girls were always falling in. If you got wet while at school you stayed and dried off the best way you could as the teacher never let one child go home by himself. All went along together.

No one knows for sure just who the first teacher was but some believe it was the old Englishman who had migrated to Bayou Chicot. He was well educated so, of course, it was the natural thing that he be asked to teach school.

He also taught Sunday School and some of his pupils had missed a few Sundays, and when he met Old Bill Griffith he asked about Ludger, Mell, and Raymond, his boys who had missed Sunday School. Mr. Griffith told Mr. Evans that they left for Sunday School each Sunday and told him he must be mistaken that they were not there. Later Mr. Griffith met Duncan Tatman and told him what the teacher had said and told him Windes had not been at Sunday School either. Then they thought about why the boys were absent.

There was a large round hole in the gully too far from the school house. They decided the boys were going swimming. They told the teacher not to say a word to the pupils as they would take care of the matter.

The next Sunday both men cut some long switches and went to the swimming hole, and hid. After the boys had stripped off all their clothes they stepped out of their hiding place, and gave them all a good switching. This broke up their missing Sunday School.

The old boys used to like Mr. Evans taught here. He was the first person in all the area to have a Magic Lantern and showed pictures to the pupils and patrons. Back then this was quite a treat as there was no kind of entertainment for this was a long time before radio or T.V. was invented. People had to make their own entertainment.

We have heard stories that Mr. Evans taught in a log house just about where DuWay Johnson’s home is located. After Dr. C. D. Tatman moved to Ville Platte in 1877 his house was used by Mr. Evans as his house was just across the road from the log house.

Dr. Tatman died in 1888 and about fifteen years ago I saw an account in the Daily World with the caption “75 years Ago from Opelousas Courier, June 27, 1913,” telling of exercises held in Mr. Evans’ school in the Dr. Tatman house, and I quote: “Prof. Evans should feel flattered by the large attendance at his funeral. He is a great favorite with the Townsfolk and had a large furnished residence on Friday last. The location of his school is admirable, being four miles from the town of Bayou Chicot at the old residence of the laments. Dr. C. D. Tatman.”

There were visiting patrons from the Big Bend, Moreauville, and Colport in Avoyelles, and others from Bayou Bœuf, Clear, Barbreck and Milburn.

Fourteen received certificates of graduation, six received certificates classed as intermediate, and eight of primary grade.” (end quote.) These pupils evidently boarded and roomed at the teacher’s home.

In these old schools teachers took time to talk about morals, what was right and wrong. In the old books the stories had a moral to them, for back in the olden days most of the readers used were McGuffey’s Eclectic. (Ek-lek’tik - this word meaning the method of selecting or choosing what is thought the best.)

Such selections as Thomas Gray’s “Elegy in a Country Church-yard,” “Landing of the Puritan Fathers,” “Tip Van Winkle,” “Eulogy of Washington,” “The Raven,” by Poe, “The Bridge,” by Longfellow, “How Men Reason,” by Oliver Wendell Holmes, except from the Bible and much, much more fine reading are all found in a Sixth Reader by McGuffey that belonged to my oldest brother, Leslie, and I now have in my library.

The next week the boys and played pranks on each other. They did this in order to have a school near enough for their children to attend. I think the only other school in existence was about four miles away. Not many years ago I understand this acre of land went back to the Tubre estate.

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