

Former teacher recalls early days of Winegar School

by Mary Ann Doyle



When Gladys Hill and her family moved to the Presque Isle area in 1943, the then Winegar Graded School was only four years old.

When Hill started teaching at the Winegar Graded School it was called graded because it had two rooms-she taught the lower classes. There were four classes in one room.

“There were about 30 youngsters in a classroom,” Hill said.

Hill started teaching at the school in 1943 after moving to Presque Isle from Madison. She had a rural teaching degree from Columbia County.

The school was built in the late 1930’s by the Work Project Administration, (WPA), which was a government program that put people to work during the depression.

It was made out of concrete block and was one of the most modern facilities built in the area.

According to JoanAnn McDonald, Presque Isle’s Chamber of Commerce secretary, the school was built with complete kitchen facilities, two classrooms, a gym and a small library.

“For its time it really was quite a building,” said McDonald.

For the children of the logging camps it must have seemed to be a palace.

“It had the first hot lunch program of any school in the area,” said Hill.

She said that having four classes in one room was really an advantage to many children.

“Many times if a student couldn’t get a subject the first time around, or had a very sketchy concept of it, they would pick it up the next year from hearing me teach a lower class,” said Hill. “It also helped them to know what they were going to be studying the next year.”

Hill said her years teaching at the Winegar Graded School was very enjoyable.

I never had any discipline problems like you hear about today,” said Hill. “Maybe someone talking out of turn or something like that. Basically the children were all very pleasant to work with.”

Today the school stands empty.

It became the site for the Presque Isle library and community center in 1970 when the Northland school was built for the townships of Winchester, Boulder Junction, Manitowish Waters and Presque Isle. Just this month the community center and the library have moved to a new facility.

The building has been named as a historic site on both the state and national register.

“I don’t know what is going to become of it,” said McDonald. “I just know that it is something I would like to see preserved.”

After Hill quit teaching, she opened an antique shop, but today she enjoys the retired life and visits from her children and grandchildren. Her husband died last Christmas. She lives in a white house on the outskirts of Presque Isle on a hill overlooking the rolling countryside.

“I’m glad we moved to Presque Isle,” said Hill. “It’s such a beautiful place and my days teaching here were very rewarding.”

Published: The Lakeland Times. [Minocqua, WI]. 4 Aug., 1995,



No Copyright claimed as to reproduced works.