

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

"A Boy's Eye View of Westminster, Part II"

Carroll County Times Article for 30 July 1995

By Jay A. Graybeal

In last week's column I wrote about Paul Reese's 1940s reminiscences about growing up in Westminster in the 1880s. Rev. Reese provided a description of his experiences as a kindergarten and elementary school student:

My first school was that of Miss Essie Walton on the second floor of the Albaugh Building at Main and Court Streets. My classmates were Emory Buckingham and Harry Irwin, and our curriculum, so far as my whole memory goes, consisted in drawing pictures on my slate of engines for the edification of my classmates. I have no recollection whatever of ABCs, or figures. Kindest of teachers; most congenial of little schools!

Again I can not fix the exact dates, but it was probably about one year after that Miss Mary Beckwith, a former pupil of my father's, organized her kindergarten in a downstairs room of the same building I shall refer later to both of these rooms for they were to receive me often. But, as Kipling says, "That is another story."

The Kindergarten was then a very new departure in juvenile education and still in its experimental stage in this country. Miss Beckwith had been a pupil of Froebel, its founder, and the "one foot in heaven" bliss of ignorance remained upon me yet a little while longer.

But was there a little feeling of envy and surprise when I hear Emory proclaim with an air that Cyreno de Bergarac might have carried: 'I can spell geography; G-E-O-R-A-P-H-Y -Gogfy! "And Jim Bond pointing to a mystic symbol on a parcheesi board and telling me it spelled "home". Too proud sixty years ago to show interest, or inquire, I wonder now as I write, what inward urge inspired them to learn?

But I do remember that I was neither too proud, not too indifferent to let my pretty teacher see how much in love with her I was. Ah me, perhaps she only pretended she failed to see and really did know how serious my intentions were.

The Kindergarten was a great success and the following year Miss Beckwith brought her step sister, Miss Laura Fulton, to Westminster to annex to her Kindergarten a Primary School on the second floor, next door to the one of the Wantz Building, then the architectural wonder and admiration of us all. We children entered by a narrow alley between them and up a flight of wooden steps.

Hazy though my mind may be as to dates, it is lucidly, crystal clear as to this location, for it was standing on the little platform at the head of those steps that the first great decision of my life was made, or shall I say, put into action. Standing there, about to reenter the school room and return to my unequal struggle with the "Three Rs", whose acquaintance I was just beginning to make, a feeling, not so much of defeatism as the utter vanity of all human endeavor, overwhelmed me and there and then, for the first and only time in my life, I hooked school.

My classmates at this time were Louie Woodward (Dr. L.K. Woodward, Ollie Grimes (E.O. Grimes, Jr.) Louie remained static at the head of the class while Ollie and I alternated between foot and next to foot.

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The next step up my scholastic ladder was when I with my two classmates, at the age of nine, became regularly enrolled members of the student body of Western Maryland College. Quite neutral elements, however, in a second highly successful experiment.

Mrs. Thomas H. Lewis, wife of the President, undertook the guidance of a little flock in her apartment in the Main Building of the group of two. Its tall windows overlooked one of the most beautiful, and to the small boy, appealing views I know of any where. And the mere fact that, for the first time in my life, my interest was more concerned about what was taking place inside the school room than out, is conclusive proof in itself of our kind and loving teacher's skill and wisdom. But I have further evidence, documentary, which I cherish. A report card signed by no less a hand than that of Dr. Lewis, showing that my old arch enemy, the Three Headed Dragon, the Three Rs, was under my heel. I also have my St. Nicholas Society badge. This was an organization patterned on the general lines of the adult Literary Society. I often appeared willingly on the weekly programs - another striking tribute to Mrs. Lewis'; generalship and diplomacy - but never held a chair. Snyder Babylon is the only officer I remember. He was President and made the address of welcome to our visitors on some state occasion.

In next week's column we will learn about the mischievous side of Paul Reese and his boyhood chums."

Photo caption: A rare interior view of Paul Reese and his classmates attending Miss Lottie Owings School at Western Maryland College in 1886. Denton Gehr, the young scholar at the chalk board, appears to be adding the numbers, 345796, 421302, and 621001. Children left to right: Miriam Lewis, Nat Keen, Lewis K. Woodward, Oliver E. Grimes, Jr., Harry Gorsuch, Jane Woodward, Denton Gehr, two unidentified girls, Paul Reese, George Sharer (?), unidentified boy, Clara Bankard, Grove Lawyer, unidentified boy, Clarence Billingslea and James A. Bond. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection, gift of Paul Reese, 1941.