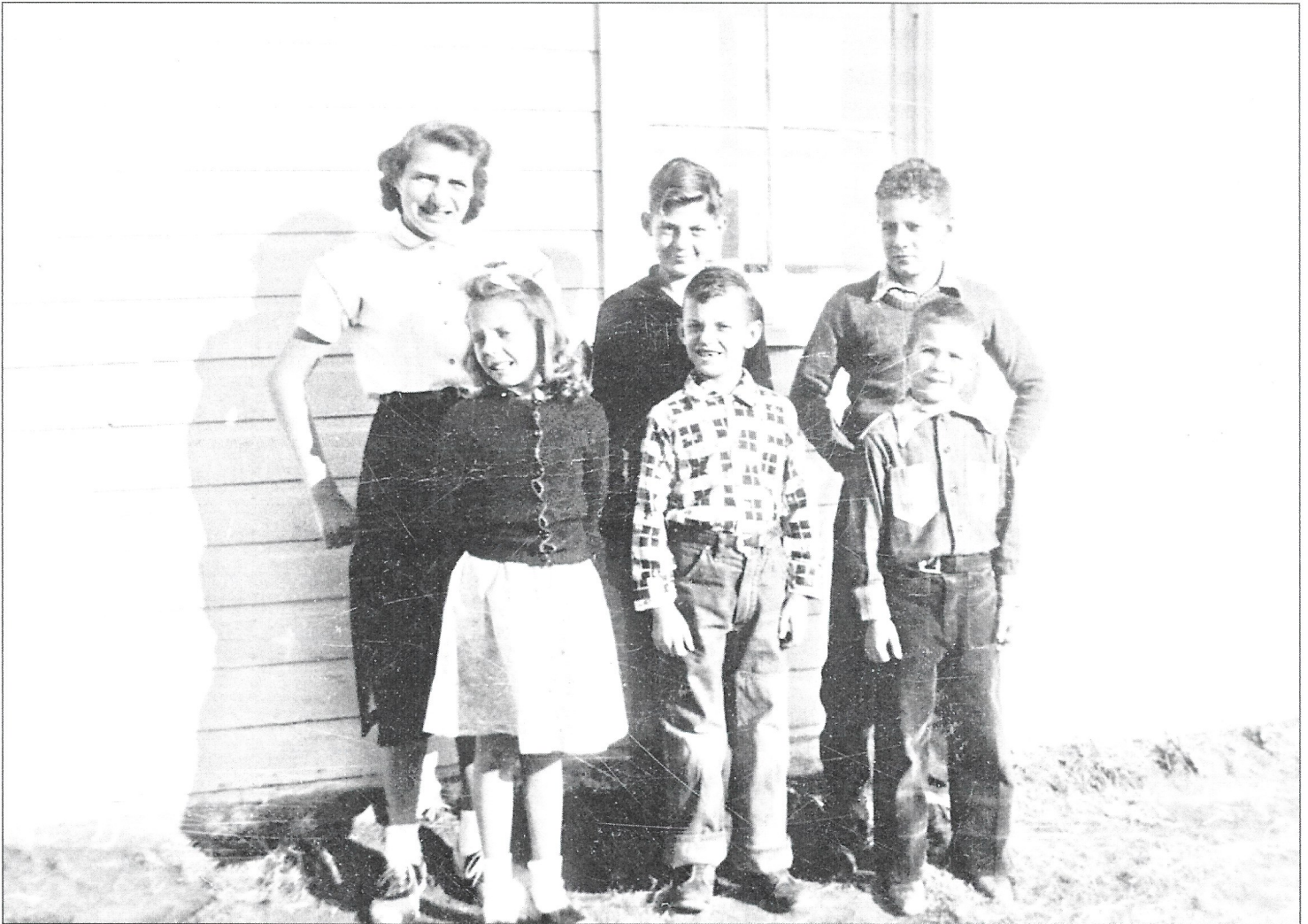


Historically Speaking

P.O. Box 1 • St. Paul, NE 68873 • www.historichc.us • E-mail: historichc@historichc.us

Leftovers



Students of District 27 stand beside their school building. They are, left, front row, Janet Kezeor, Ralph Kezeor, Kent Gerdes; back row, Virginia Matousek, Gerald Gdanitz (deceased), and Robert Moraczewski.—Photo courtesy of Virginia Matousek Hirschman

*Written by Julie Spilinek,
Historical Society Secretary*

Shortly after the previous issue of *Historically Speaking* was published I found in my file another informative article about attending a country school. It was written by Al Knoepfel in 2013. Some of his comments are similar to those in the last issue; however, he has reflected on a few

additional memories.

Also in this issue is the history of District 15, thanks to Donita Meyer Anderson, a present director of the HCHS. The article was originally printed in a 1990 “annual” of the Bunker Hill school.

Virginia Hirschman also shared a picture of District 27.

A Message From the President *Kaye Tomlinson*

The Holidays are here. So many fun things are going on at the Historical Village. Thanksgiving was very nice and Christmas will be super. The volunteers got together to decorate the depot and we all had a lot of fun. The whole village is decorated for Christmas. Everything is festive and it brings the village alive.

December 2-3 will be St. Paul's Community Christmas Festival. Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus will arrive with treats for every one. There is a horse driven sleigh and a train and lots of children will be there and eat lots of cookies and drink plenty of hot cocoa. I wish all of our ancestors could see the village now—all decked out for the holidays. And, you know, maybe they will see our village.

There are so many volunteers working and taking care of the village. I want to thank them all. To keep our village clean and looking great at all times, it takes a lot of time and a lot of people.

I think our ancestors would be proud of all that has been done to preserve the village of days gone by.

There have been many weddings and a few baptisms at our village church. What a neat place to be married or baptised at.

Our new Big Building will be done completely by next spring and we will be filling it with many "new" to us exhibits. It is very exciting. We never know about the future, but our "Past" has been preserved very nicely.

Until next time, keep hope and love in your hearts and I wish peace to all of you.

Memories of District 10

(Memories of growing up on a farm five miles south of Farwell, Nebraska, in the thirties and forties come to mind more frequently now for Al

Knoepfel living in Grand Island with Darlene, his wife.)

Among the brief years of farm and country school life, which seemed like a period of decades at the time, were eight short school terms of elementary public education at Kelso Precinct, District 10, a one-room school located right next to Oak Creek, one mile east and one half mile north of Kelso Cemetery southwest of Farwell, Nebraska. Kelso school no longer exists; the location of the site is now a corn field, and the only landmarks remaining are three corner posts of a fence line bordering the creek. The buildings have been torn down or were moved away many years ago; the school house probably became a storage building somewhere. The location of Kelso may have been forgotten by many, yet it had served as a mainstay providing valuable elementary public education as a foundation to build lives on for fifteen pupils from two generations of Knoepfels—six siblings (five girls, Emma (Becker), Annie (Kaiser), Lizzie (Jorgensen), Martha (Shuman) and Dora (Sager) along with one boy, Chris, Al's father, all children of John and Amelia (Meyer) Knoepfel who immigrated from Germany in 1874 to homestead a farm one-half mile north of Kelso school; additionally, nine siblings, (six boys, John, Clarence, Harlan, Arnold, Donald and Alvernon, and three girls, Christina (Kruse), Elvena (Campbell), and Angeline (Dibbern), all children of Chris and Martha Knoepfel, who lived two miles east of Kelso Cemetery.

Al's father, Chris, who was born in a sod house a half mile north of Kelso, once remarked that more than fifty pupils were enrolled at times while he attended there. During his years as a student every child had his or her individual slate board on which to solve arithmetic problems, as well as to practice spelling and writing grammar or geography essays. Al's mother, Martha, daughter of John and Dorothea (Neuhofel) Lemburg, who also immigrated from Germany in the 1860s, was born on a homesteaded farm, one of sixteen children, and attended a one-room country school, District 47, one mile south of Kelso Cemetery.

The Kelso days of yore, providing eight grades of elementary schooling, were often the total of a student's formal education. The mindset of many families then was that boys could depend on their brawn and muscle to provide them an

adequate livelihood, thus limiting schooling to eight grades, while girls, sometimes referred to as the weaker sex, might be better equipped for life by going on and completing high school.

Kelso teachers, usually female, would room and board during the school term at the home of a school board member or patron family within walking distance from school. She would arrive early in the day to get ready the physical aspects of school life necessary for her pupils. Her duties would include that of being the school's only custodian, unlocking the doors, building a fire in the stove if necessary and maintaining a desired room temperature without the assistance of a thermostat, tidying the floor and desks, filling the drinking crock-ware with water personally pumped from the well, and review lesson plans for the day. From time to time she would designate some pupils to voluntarily be her assistants in areas of pumping water, cleaning blackboards, getting coal from the coal shed, scattering sweeping compound on the floor and then sweeping it back up for future use, keeping the water fountain filled, emptying the waste baskets, distributing books and other materials, maintaining sportsmanship and order on the playground, and especially being a helper for the smaller ones with their various needs.

Teaching methods included a goodly amount of memorization for many subjects; the use of flash cards could readily reinforce the ability to retain in the memory what was learned and assist in training the student to quickly articulate the correct answers upon questioning.

Some of the details remembered at Kelso, which may be partially foreign to minds and experiences of present-day school life, were the hand-operated well pump close by the front and only door of the building, a coal shed, outdoor boys' and girls' toilets, and a scoop shovel to clear snow away from the front door and make a path to the toilets and coal shed (no sidewalks were present back then) when it snowed. Walking to and from school was the only means of transit except on rare occasions of an emergency or extremely bad weather. Walking distances from the school to each student's home varied from a half to two or more miles.

Some dress fashions of the times were print dresses for girls, sewn together from 50 lb. cloth flour sacks; three sacks with the same pattern

were needed to complete one dress. This would sometimes require trading empty flour sacks with neighboring families. Cotton and flannel shirts were also sewn on a foot-powered treadle Singer sewing machine from dry goods material purchased in town and cut to a pattern fitting a boy's shirt size. Denim overalls worn over long underwear (there were summer and winter styles) were common attire for boys. Hook-and-eye shoes completed the student's wardrobe, not counting overshoes, coats, caps and mittens worn for the climate and degree of weather.

Homework assigned by the teacher was usually attended to during daylight hours in between other farm chores and meals; reading, writing, problem solving and other school-related activities attempted after dark had to be done with kerosene lamp or lantern light as electric lights were not available until first provided by the R.E.A. at the Knoepfel farm in the spring of 1945 when Al was in seventh grade. Telephone use was also unavailable most years of the great depression because of a lack of funds to maintain such a service.

Noon meals carried to school in individual lunch pails varied, depending on what was available. Standard fare for Knoepfels included sandwiches usually prepared with home baked whole wheat (ground at the grist mill in Dannebrog) bread and butter with homemade jelly (mulberry, cherry, wild plum, gooseberry, choke cherry, wild grape or apple butter), delicious homemade cheese, home smoked mettwurst sausage or braunschweiger, egg salad or peanut butter, along with a home baked cookie if one was available. The annual butchering of a hog or beef during the winter season would provide other meats after it was canned and stored in an underground cave sixteen feet below the ground's surface where the air temperature was a constant sixty-two degrees fahrenheit.

Favorite playground games were softball, pump-pump-pull away, annie-annie-over the school house and fox and goose played in the snow during winter. Girls would often play marbles and boys would try their hand at mumblety-peg with their pocket knives, on occasion when it was good and cold they might also sneak down to the spring-fed creek at noon unannounced, to run and glide on the ice. Athletic equipment consisted of two softballs and two bats annually. Basketball

and football were only high school and college sports then and seldom if ever played at country schools.

The interior of the school house had a yellow pine wood floor with an ever present odor of sweeping compound; single pane, double hung windows; coal-fired stove with coal storage hopper and pail, fire irons and ash bucket; coal shovel; sack of sweeping compound; broom and dust pan; crock-ware drinking fountain; Regulator wall wind-up clock; teacher's desk; maple top single and double pupils' desks with ink wells installed; American flag; world dictionary on a stand; eight-inch elevated wood platform with two wall mounted slate blackboards on the same level as the teacher's desk; roller shade maps; visual aids of correct cursive writing letters; bookcases and shelving for text and library books; world globe; Victrola wind-up record player; two wooden recitation benches on the room floor in front of the teacher's desk. Each student had in their possession a Big Chief writing tablet. Absent from the room were electric lights and telephones. A hook was fastened to the ceiling in the center of the room where a lamp using silk mantels and white gas could be hung should any night time meetings ever be required. Kelso School was also the official polling station of Kelso Precinct where local, state and national public elections were held.

Al remembers student enrollment to vary from year to year with an average of about fifteen in attendance at any given time. The school house was a mile and three-fourths walking distance to and from home where he lived with and grew up close to his parents. Three brothers and a sister were also school aged at the time. It took about 45 minutes walking each way observing and listening to the presence of song and game birds as well as the four-legged domestic and game animals which sometimes popped up close by or could be seen in a distance. Little thought was given at the time to what was actually taking place as if their minds automatically shifted into a mode-like cruise control, occasionally picking up a dirt clod and targeting a fence post using a well-trained throwing arm. Angie, however, remembers some agonizing days not looking forward to walking home from school on the road by a certain farm place only to be met there by an unfriendly Billy goat whose only intent was to frighten and possi-

bly knock her down for invading a territory thought to be only his.

One cold morning in 1938, after a heavy snowfall, Al's parents readied their five youngest children for school, buttoning all of them up from head to toe so they might brave the one and-three-quarter-mile trek to Kelso. Father Chris encouraged Harlan, the oldest of that bunch and thirteen years old at the time, to willingly take the lead and forge a trail in the wind-driven fluffy stuff all the way to school for his younger sister and three smaller brothers to follow in an easier pathway. Had a camera captured the winter moment at the time with a picture, it would have been worth a thousand words.

Classroom time consisted of the female teacher announcing that each grade should move from their desks at designated times to the recitation bench where students were quizzed concerning the day's assignments and given the opportunity to prove if they could put into words what they had learned.

At the end of the day students could only be dismissed from the room after the teacher had given instructions to put all personal things away in their desks and then giving the command to turn, rise and pass.

The county superintendent would occasionally make a friendly visit to Kelso to observe first hand a teacher's degree of knowledge, teaching skills, grading process, classroom discipline and how well the teacher and students interacted with each other. Such visits always appeared to end on a complimentary and positive note.

In conclusion, many, many pleasant memories come to mind of one student's experiences at Kelso from 1938 as a first grader to graduating from the eighth grade in 1946. It is also fitting to acknowledge and express sincere thanks and appreciation for the efforts of administrators, teachers and fellow students in helping to equip someone for a lifetime of associations and occupations with little regret.

History of District 15

By Donita Meyer Anderson

Howard County District 15 was not always Bunker Hill, nor was it located where it now stands. In 1906, a little white wooden frame schoolhouse sat on what is now the Junction of

Highway 92-281. This is where the original District 15 was located.

In the late 20's, this original building was replaced with a brand new building, and it still sat on the same location: Highway 92-281 Junction. This was District 15, but not Bunker Hill School. This District 15 was known as the White Way School, so named from the white stretch of concrete which stretched from the Middle Loup Bridge south of St. Paul on U.S. 281 to the location of where the Allan Lessig residence now stands. There was a school building sitting on the Allan Lessig residence during this time which was the original Bunker Hill School.

In reference to the picture taken during the school term of 1928-29 when Miss Christina Moravec was the teacher with her 28 pupils standing in front of the new White Way, District 15 School building, take note of the Standard School

sign posted above the door. This was posted on all rural schools that were approved or accredited by the state in the late 20's and early 30's.

It was also interesting to learn that one of these pupils, Cyril Tuma, was a victim of polio and was severely crippled. His dad would bring him to school, through deep snow, in a Star Auto pulled by a team of horses so the wind shield of the car would block the howling wind in the winter. This man, Mr. Tuma, went on to become a radio personality in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and at one time even was the mayor of Tulsa. Having a handicap or disability certainly did not hamper his achievement of success in life! During this era it was also not an easy time for teachers. Lois Alexander Hatfield of St. Paul was a teacher who was awarded a pair of tall boots so that she would be able to wade through the water in the basement in order to start the furnace. The water table

The directors of the Historical Society decided not to have a traditional bake sale during the Christmas Festival that was held December 2 and 3. Instead, it was decided to hold a 'bakeless' bake sale that will continue until the end of the year. Rather than pondering over what to make, purchasing the supplies and preparing the product, one simply decides the monetary value of the items not baked and donate that to the Society. The whole process should only take a few minutes.

The following is a poem someone composed to 'honor' such an event. (From the Internet.)

*Many times we've heard people say
I would rather give a dollar than bake today.*

*So we have a plan that's bound to be a success
Join our Bakeless Bake Sale and keep your kitchen spotless.*

*Just send HCHS the money it would take
To bake a dozen brownies or a homemade cake*

*Or send in the money it takes to buy
A box of cookies or a sweet apple pie.*

*You'll save time and calories, that's for sure
More importantly, help the Society to endure.*

(author unknown)

would rise very high and create problems for many people with basements.

A sad incident recalled was one day when Henry Kotrc and his sister were walking to school, they were walking down the railroad track, and Henry happened to get his foot caught in the ties and could not get it loose. A train came along just at that time, and Henry met a tragic death.

In the late 40's, White Way School (District 15) had only about six students attending; therefore, a gradual merging process began. About 1948, this school began merging with District 73 (southwest of Gage Valley School), District 76 (the Kiser district), District 53 (Eddie Lanka's district west across the road from John Preisendorf's farm), and District 65, Bunker Hill School (located where the Allan Lessig residence now stands).

During the summer of 1951, this new building, White Way School District 15, was moved from the Junction 92-281 site and placed at its present location. Later it was renamed Bunker Hill. The enrollment ranged from 23 to 27 pupils. With the enrollment so large, an addition was needed for the school. It was during the summer of 1960 when a second room was added to this one room school. The first two teachers to teach in the new building were Theda Van Horn and

Imogene Kolar, with a total enrollment of 37 pupils. This was the 1960-61 school term.

During the 50's or early 60's, it was recalled that the steam train would stop at this school and take the students for a ride as far as Elba where the parents would be waiting to pick up their children. This was when there were passenger cars for people to ride.

Annual school picnics were always a highlight to culminate the year. Many picnics were held on the Puncochar grove east of the Jim Puncochar residence.

Halloween parties also used to be an exciting "scary" affair. It was the custom to have parents and children come to school on Halloween night all dressed in costumes. The evening was filled with games and possibly box socials or pie socials.

In 1972, it was noted that Walt Alderman was hired to give all the school children airplane rides. This certainly would have been exciting for everyone!

Bunker Hill, District 15 School, holds many dear memories for many individuals. At this writing, May of 1990, there are a total of thirteen students attending with two teachers. We hope that the doors will be able to remain open for many years to come. Bunker Hill School is a school of which everyone should be very proud.

Gifts for Christmas

"Entering Howard County" books are the perfect Christmas gift. They are available for the low price of \$25, plus \$1.63 tax.

Books May Be Purchased at
The Phonograph-Herald, and
St. Paul Chamber of Commerce

or by mail from the
**Howard County
Historical Society**

P.O. Box 1
St. Paul, NE 68873

Add an additional \$6 for postage and handling.

TEACHERS OF DISTRICT 15 (1930-1990)

- 1930-33 Elma Rasmussen, Grand Island (3 years)
- 1933-36 Ruby Alexander, St. Paul (3 years)
- 1936-39 Marie Komsak, St. Paul (3 years)
- 1939-41 Elvira Anderson, St. Paul (2 years)
- 1941-47 Margaret Walters, St. Paul (6 years)
- 1947-49 Josephine Waltman, St. Paul (2 years)
- 1949-50 Patricia Holtorf, St. Libory (1 year)
- 1950-52 Dorothy Fisher, St. Paul (2 years)
- 1952-53 Darlene McCarty, St. Paul (1 year)
- 1953-54 Phyllis Safarik, Elba (1 year)
- 1954-55 Aldean Horky, Farwell (1 year)
- 1955-56 Aldean Markvicka, St. Paul (1 year), 23 pupils
- 1956-58 Marilys Sears, St. Paul (2 years), 21 -25 pupils
- 1958-59 Evelyn Zlomke, Palmer (1 year), 26 pupils
- 1959-60 Ruth Larson, Grand Island (1 year), 27 pupils
- 1960-63, Theda Van Horn, St. Paul (3 years), Imogene Kolar, Wolbach (3 years) 33-37 pupils
- 1963-64 Theda Van Horn, St. Paul (1 year), Janice Wrehe, Loup City (1 year), 30 pupils
- 1964-65 Theda Van Horn, St. Paul (1 year), Verna Zabloudil, Grand Island (1 year), 37 pupils
- 1965-66 Ron Derner, St. Paul (1 year), Dorothy Selden, Dannebrog (1 year), 34 pupils
- 1966-69 Ron Derner, St. Paul (3 years), Meta Keep, Scotia (3 years), 33-42 pupils
- 1969-72 Ron Derner, St. Paul (3 years), Marilyn Hammond, St. Paul (3 years), 35-45 pupils
- 1972-75 Ron Derner, St. Paul (3 years), Marie Marco, Greeley, (3 years), 21-30 pupils.
- 1975-76 Marie Marco, Greeley (1 year), Don Adams, Fullerton (1 year), 19 pupils.
- 1976-79 Marilyn Svoboda, St. Paul (3 years), Marie Marco, St. Paul (3 years) 16-18 pupils
- 1979-81 Marilyn Svoboda, St. Paul (2 years), Rebecca Boelts, Archer (2 years), 17

pupils

- 1981-82 Marilyn Svoboda, St. Paul (1 year), Marlene Meyer, St. Libory (1 year), 17 pupils
- 1982-84 Marlene Meyer, St. Paul (2 years), Rebecca Boelts, Archer (2 years), 16-19 pupils
- 1984-87 Marlene Meyer, St. Paul (3 years), Melvin Munsinger, Grand Island (3 years), 20-21 pupils
- 1987-90 Marlene Meyer, St. Paul (3 years), Jeanne Jablonski, Grand Island (3 years), 13-17 pupils.

By Julie Spilinek

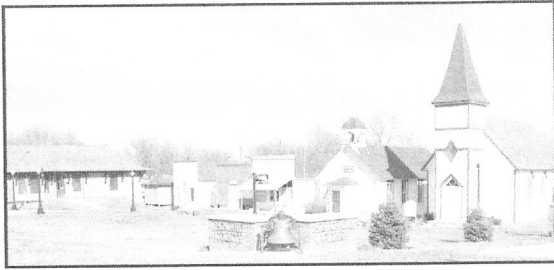
In a 2014 issue, I included information about several of the doctors who practiced in St. Paul. Vanice Bahensky told me about one of her experiences with Dr. Arnold. She was 15 when she began to feel ill. Her dad thought she may have eaten too much popcorn until the pain became intense. She was taken to what was then Solomon Hospital (1933) and Dr. Arnold performed an emergency appendectomy as it had already burst. During her recuperation Mrs. Frank Blazek tried to make her feel better by giving her a series of treats/small gifts to be opened one at a time, on the hour.

She was still in the hospital prior to Thanksgiving and Dr. Arnold personally drove her to her home on Thanksgiving to spend a couple of hours with her family. He assured her he had a nice new car and she would be comfortable. Due to the recent surgery she was still quite sore and with the somewhat rough road she wasn't all that comfortable but glad to be home for awhile.

She recounted another memory concerning Dr. Arnold when her first child was born. The charge was \$20 but all the family could afford was \$17.50 and Dr. Arnold accepted it as payment in full.

As we visited, I asked her about any school memories. She attended White Elephant School and she remembered how the boys seem to do a lot of fighting.

As a result of rising costs, the yearly membership dues have been raised to \$15, effective in 2017.



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Historically Speaking



INSIDE: Julie Spilinek continues her compilation of memories of country school education in Howard County.

Historically Speaking

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