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The Old Alberene School Reaches the End of the Line

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The days of Alberene having a school building of its own is fast coming to an end.

Once the location of a four-year high school as well as elementary school the village will soon see its last school building, closed since 1952, torn down.

The story of the Alberene schools is the story of the community. The need for adequate education facilities grew as the work of the Virginia Soapstone Company drew workers into the area, then declined as the company shifted its quarrying to Schuyler, leaving behind the ghost of a boom town.

Alberene had two schools before the present one, both of which burned. The first was a two-room building which stood near the site of the present Masonic Hall. The Virginia Soapstone Company built this and when it burned, the company put up a larger building which took care of a four-year high school.

This was the period of boom for Alberene- just after the turn of the century.

Melvin Harris was principal of the new school. His home was Melvale which stands between Schuyler and Alberene. Next principal was T.S. Settle, who later became state superintendent of schools.

The fourth principal was J.W. Givens, whose wife taught in the school. They stayed ten years, during which time the school burned - in 1910.

This building was the handsomest of the three schools Alberene has had – with a large auditorium and stage.

It burned during the school term and the older pupils had to be housed in the upstairs rooms of the soapstone company's missionary building, now used by J. I. Maupin as a store. The smaller children finished school in rooms in a doctor's office building, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Luther Clements.

In 1911, the company, now the Virginia-Alberene Corporation, put up the third building, also built to accommodate a high school.

Two of the veteran teachers from this school were Miss Mary Butler, who went on to teach at Bristol Business College, and Mrs. Lillie Pace Taylor, who is now living in Washington, D.C. A third at the Alberene School for many years was the late Mrs. Rosa Marshall.

The decline in attendance at the school began in 1916 when the soapstone operations were shifted to Schuyler.

By 1920, the senior high school had been abandoned in 1935 the junior high school was taken to Scottsville. Next the seventh grade was shifted to Scottsville.

Then in 1951, all but the first and second grades were sent to Esmont and finally a year later, the school closed when these two classes also went to Esmont.

The school building has been sold to the Centenary Methodist Church to be torn down and rebuilt at a new site for use as Sunday school rooms.

The last chapter for the school will be written Saturday when the land on which the school stands will be sold at public auction in Charlottesville.