

The School House

Written by Lenora Smith Purcell, circa 2004

I saw a little schoolhouse,
Not so many miles from here;
As I walked across the playground,
Childhood days seemed very near.
In that room, I used to study,
And I felt a thrill of pride
As I peeped in at a window
At the change I saw inside.

That's a furnace in the corner,
Where we used to stack the wood;
More seats occupy the center,
Where the rusty box-stove stood.
Rows of shelves beneath south windows,
Well-kept floors—a glossy brown—
Painted walls, bright cut-out pictures,
Just like any school in town.

Strained our eyes to get our lesson,
When the clouds hung close and gray,
Now glass tubes upon the ceiling
Brighten up the darkest day.
There's a fancy water cooler,
Maybe it's electric, too;
No more passing 'round a tin cup
Like we children used to do.

Bucket "accidentally" tilted,
Most of us a sorry sight;
Looking, as we marched to classes
Like we'd had a water fight.
There was one prim little lady,
Never got her stockings wet;
Never mussed her starchy apron,
We all called her "teacher's pet."

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One boy pulled our hair to tease us,
Some were pig-tails, some were curls;
Once he tied two braids together,
They belonged to different girls.
But no tricks were even ventured,
Nor a book allowed to fall,
When the county superintendent
Came to make his yearly call.

Yes, we had a few bad moments,
But a lot of good ones, too.
Like the time a mouse was hidden
In the teacher's overshoe.
Or when overcome with giggles,
Should have been at work, I guess,
But instead watched Nan pour birdshot
Down the neck of Mary's dress.

Kate, my pretty little seat mate,
Said she'd like to live some day
On a street of stylish brick-flats,
In a city far away.
Little girl, did nothing warn her,
This school term would be her last—
For she'd reached "That Shining City,"
Ere another year had passed.

Little School, fond memories linger,
In the hearts of girls and boys,
Who across your well-worn threshold
Stepped to meet life's cares and joys.
Ninety-four, Iuka Township,
Prairie Grove, for all to see,
That's your name on county records,
But you're "Number Six" to me.

Note: This poem was written by Lenora Smith Purcell. The date the poem was written is unknown, but it was published in the 2004 Fall edition of "Footprints in Marion County" magazine.