

One Room Country School

Written by Wayman Presley, 1980

One room country schools have long been gone,
But many remember the sound,
Of the big iron bell on top of the house,
That was heard for miles around.

None of we kids had watches,
But when we heard the first bell ring,
Knew we had half hour to get there,
Be seated and ready to sing.

Teacher would arrive before us,
Unsaddle and tie up her mare,
Little hat up on top of her head,
Held by a pin thru her hair.

Big poker rattled in cast iron stove,
As she stirred up overnight coals,
A big sheet of zinc lay underneath,
So clinkers wouldn't burn holes.

She rang the big bell again at nine,
Not as long this time as before,
Tin lunch buckets clinked on the shelves in the back,
Heavy shoes scuffed on the floor.

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Recitation bench 'cross front of the room,
And all the classes used it,
Her little bell, tapped three times,
Meant rise, come forward and sit.

The click of the chalk on the blackboard,
Woodpeckers hammerin' on trees,
Bumblebees flew thru windows up,
On warm days to let in the breeze.

She taught us how to prepare for life,
To think fast and stand up tall,
When these one room schools were dead, my friends,
It was a sad, sad day for us all.

Note: This poem was written by Wayman Presley, found of Presley Tours, for the dedication of the East Nation one-room school at Salem, Illinois, June 8, 1980.