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Interview with Ethel and Raymond Haneke

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Ethel Haneke

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GRAL HISTORY

Interview
with

ETHEL and RAYMOND HANEKE

by

Suzanne McDaniel

Dr. Allan Miller
History of American Education
July, 1984

The following is an interview with Mrs. Ethel Haneke by Suzanne McDaniel. This interview was prepared for Dr. Allen Miller for his History of American Education class, July, 1984.

Suzanne: Ethel, today I am going to talk to you about some of your experiences of teaching in a one-room schoolhouse. In what years did you teach?

Ethel: I taught the 1952-53, 53-54 school years.

Suzanne: Where did you teach?

Ethel: At Beaver Bank. It's four miles east of Ellis and about three-fourths of a mile north.

Suzanne: How much schooling did you have in order to teach?

Ethel: I had an A.B. degree from the University of Kansas.

Suzanne: Did you live in Ellis while you were teaching?

Ethel: Yes, I was married and lived at home, thank God.

Suzanne: How were teachers expected to conduct themselves in the community?

Ethel: As far as I know, we had no special rules that we were expected to follow at this time.

Suzanne: What was your pay while you were teaching in this one-room schoolhouse?

Ethel: The first year was thirty-two hundred dollars and the second year was thirty-four hundred.

Suzanne: How did you get your paychecks?

Ethel: They were mailed to me monthly.

Suzanne: Who employed you?

Ethel: The school board consisting of three members.

Suzanne: Was this a school board just of that area?

Ethel: Yes, and they were elected by the people.

Suzanne: How big of an area did the school serve? In other words what were the boundaries?

Ethel: At that time the students traveled no more than two miles to school. I'm not sure of the boundaries of the school area.

Suzanne: When did the school open and close?

Ethel: It closed in the later '50's. I do not know when it opened.

Suzanne: How did the people decide upon the location of the school?

Ethel: The location was the one given to the township by the state when they divided the state into sections and gave each district a location to build a school.

Suzanne: What materials were used to build the school?

Ethel: It was a wooden structure.

Suzanne: How did the school get its water?

Ethel: We had a well with an electric pump.

Suzanne: Can you describe the interior of the school?

Ethel: As you entered the front entrance way there was a boys bathroom on one side and a girls bathroom on the other. Then past the cloak room you would enter into the large room which was the school room on the north of the building. On the south along the schoolroom was a library and a kitchen.

Suzanne: You said that you had a school board of three members that governed the school. How did they finance it?

Ethel: It was by taxation.

Suzanne: Did you often meet with the school board?

Ethel: No, just when I got hired and again when I needed something for the school or something broke down, I would call one of them.

Suzanne: If something broke down who did you call?

Ethel: Whichever school board member I could get.
Suzanne: Was there anyone in particular that had to keep the building up?
Ethel: No, they all worked together with that.
Suzanne: Did you have any physical type of problems with the building?
Ethel: Very few, once in a while the furnace would go out.
Suzanne: Did this little area raise money for the equipment?
Ethel: No, it was from the taxes.
Suzanne: Was the schoolhouse only used for teaching?
Ethel: It was used as a community center for any group that would like to use it. For 4-H clubs or any kind of social events they wished.
Suzanne: Did more than one teacher work in that school?
Ethel: No, this was always a one teacher school.
Suzanne: Did you have a principal over you?
Ethel: No, we were governed by the county superintendent who lived in Hays.
Suzanne: Do you know if there was a problem of teacher turnover in that school?
Ethel: As far as I know, there was none.
Suzanne: How did you get the supplies for your school?
Ethel: I would make out a list of what I wanted and send it to the school board and I usually got it.
Suzanne: Is this school still available? I mean is it still a place or have they torn it down?
Ethel: It has been torn down and a house has been placed on that location.
Suzanne: What teacher aids did you have available for your use?
Ethel: At that time the ones that I used were the ones I had made for myself as I needed them.
Suzanne: Did you use them with any particular grade level or did you use them with all grade levels?
Ethel: I usually made them for specific children since there were a few in each class whichever one would need something special I would prepare it for them. And we did have alot of workbooks at that time so we had plenty of work to keep everyone busy.
Suzanne: What were the ages of the onildren?
Ethel: During those two years I did have children that were in all eight grades.
Suzanne: Was the usual age around six or did it vary?
Ethel: Yes, they were six when they were allowed to start school.
Suzanne: You said the greatest distance was only two miles?
Ethel: For the ones that were enrolled when I taught there, yes.
Suzanne: How did they get to school?
Ethel: Their parents brought them by car.
Suzanne: What was the length of the school year and the school day?
Ethel: The school day was from 9 until 4 and the school year was 9 months.
Suzanne: Did you start in Septemeber or August like we do now?
Ethel: We started in September.
Suzanne: September and got out in May?
Ethel: Yes. There was no spring break.

- Suzanne: Can you describe your school day--what you began with and how you conducted the classes?
- Ethel: We started with the flag salute, using a patriotic song, a prayer, and then everyone would start with their assignments.
- Suzanne: After the opening exercises, what was the order for the day?
- Ethel: The first period in the morning until the morning recess was devoted to reading activities for everyone. After recess until noon, we worked on math. After lunch, the first graders would have more reading and language arts activities along with second graders. Then the other groups were paired off so that like the fourth and fifth grade would have social studies together. One year that group would have fourth grade social studies and the next year would have fifth grade social studies. The same thing with the other groups so that by the time they graduated, they had covered the full curriculum.
- Suzanne: Did the student have to fit in any type of chores or anything throughout the day when they were attending school?
- Ethel: Not the group that I had at that time did not.
- Suzanne: What type of teaching methods did you use?
- Ethel: It was individualized in reading and math and small groups in the other subjects.
- Suzanne: What kind of textbooks did you have to work with?
- Ethel: We used the county adopted textbooks.
- Suzanne: What system of evaluation was used?
- Ethel: It was on teacher testing and grading. And then each year the eighth graders had to take the county exam to be able to pass.
- Suzanne: You talked about a library. How large was this library?
- Ethel: We had a very good library for a public school. We had up-to-date dictionaries, encyclopedia, reference books and all told probably about 500 books.
- Suzanne: How did you handle discipline problems? Or did you have any?
- Ethel: We had very few discipline problems. The only ones that we seem to have were the arguments among the children about their religion. We had Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists and this was the topic of their conversations at recess when the teacher wasn't standing around.
- Suzanne: How did you handle it?
- Ethel: We talked about understanding each other's religions and trying to get them to see that there was more than one religion that might be acceptable. But their parents didn't feel this way so the children didn't feel this way.
- Suzanne: So other than that you really didn't have to discipline children?
- Ethel: No, as far as their behavior, they were a very well behaved group.
- Suzanne: What kind of special observances did you have?
- Ethel: We had school parties for things like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas which was a community party. We had a Christmas community program that everyone came to. We observed Easter, Valentines Day and various things and birthdays. Everyone had a birthday party.

Suzanne: Nowadays, we have all these activities between schools-- football, debate and everything else. Did you have any type of activities that took place between schools in this area?

Ethel: We had county spelling contests and county music contests every year.

Suzanne: Did you have any special type of classes or educational services that you offered in that school?

Ethel: No, we had nothing of this kind at that time.

Suzanne: What was the average number of years a student spent in school?

Ethel: Eight.

Suzanne: Whattype of graduation exercises were performed?

Ethel: There were none.

Suzanne: Did they have to go through anything to graduate?

Ethel: They had to pass the county tests.

Suzanne: Just the county test?

Ethel: Right.

Suzanne: O.K.

Ethel: Sometimes the parents would have a party for the eighth graders but this was individual.

Suzanne: What was the dress and appearance of the students.

Ethel: These were all farm students and were clean and were well-dressed when they came to school.

Suzanne: Did you have any special rules at your school?

Ethel: We set rules only when they needed to be set. And this would bring about maybe a loss of recess if there was too much visiting or talking during the school day.

Suzanne: Did a student have to pay to go to school?

Ethel: No, they did not. They had to buy their own books and that was it.

Suzanne: Did this community have anything like the PTA or any other organization where the parents and teachers were involved together?

Ethel: No, but at least once or twice a year we would have a basket dinner where all the people of the community would come to school.

Suzanne: What type of occupations did your students eventually take up?

Ethel: They went out to various occupations which probably could be called the blue-collar kind of activities--nurses aids and farmers and things of that kind.

Suzanne: Were the majority of the original students of a particular religion or nationality?

Ethel: The religions in this group were pretty well evenly divided. However, the background of most of them was German.

Suzanne: Since they were German, did you have to follow any certain customs or traditions?

Ethel: No, we did not at school. But the children would bring information from home of things or customs that they did have in their homes.

Suzanne: How many children did you have?

Ethel: Thirteen.

Suzanne: Did this school make any lasting contributions to the community it served?

Ethel: I'm sure it did in the fact that all these children that I had did go on and graduate from high school. And as far as I know they are all upstanding citizens of their community.

Suzanne: Thank you, Ethel. And now if we can get you husband to come in here and we'll have a little talk with him.

(The following is an interview by Suzanne with Ethel and her husband Ray. Som of Ray's comments are heard to hear due to the fact he was sitting a little too far from the tape recorder. The information is down as complete as possible.)

Suzanne: We have Ethel's husband, Ray, in with us now. When I talked to Ethel and Ray earlier, they both indicated that they had themselves attended a one-room schoolhouse. And I wanted to get some comparison and differences from the time that Ethel taught, from when she was a student there, and maybe some experiences from Ray. Do you mind telling me when you went to school?

Ray: Well, let's see-I started in 1928.

Ethel: I started in 1927.

Suzanne: Did the school time or the day start at approximately at the same time. I think you said it was 9 to 4?

Ethel: Yes, mine started at 9 and let out at 4.

Ray: 9 to 4 also.

Ethel: However it was an eight month school instead of nine.

Suzanne: What months since it was an eight month school?

Ethel: Setpember to-

Ray: to the first of April - about the second week of April we were out. You asked my wife a question earlier about chores, this is how they worked around it. You see, after the seeding time in the fall you started and the beginning of harvest time in the spring you got out.

Ethel: This was true when I went to the country school but when I taught there the children stayed in school.

Suzanne: You talking recess and noon, what did you do during your recesses?

Ray: Well, recesses were short. Noon usually you either had a ball game, volleyball, drop the handkerchief, ring around the rosie, or some activities.

Ethel: Usually the games we played were blind man's bluff, ring around the rosie, races, the older children would play ball games.

Suzanne: Is this basically what they played when you were teaching?

Ethel: No, we played more modern games and more ball kind of activities.

Suzanne: You were talking about lunch, what did you bring for lunch?

Ray: Well, oack in those days it was probably maybe an egg sandwich, banana, apple. In winter pork or beef sandwiches. There were alot of egg sandwiches.

Ethel: We had a hot lunch program in the fact that children were assigned by the teacher what to bring. Maybe one of us would bring a gallon of milk, somebody else would bring potatoes and the older students would prepare and we would have potato soup. Or each day we would have some hot thing to go along with the sandwiches or whatever we brought from home. There would be some children who brought nothing and they would just get that.

Suzanne: What did you have when you were teaching?

Ethel: We had an electric kitchen at Beaver Bank with an electric stove and refrigerator. And if the children wanted they could bring something and like maybe we would have baked potatoes and things of this kind or if some mother would send a bowl of soup for the school and we would have that from time to time. But it wasn't anything that we regularly planned.

Suzanne: Nowadays we have to listen to the radio to find out if we don't have school that day. How did you find out when the snow was so bad that you couldn't get to school?

Ray: School was never canceled because transportation was such in Ellis County it was by buggy, horseback or walking. My brothers and I lived $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from school. Lots of times we'd walk it. We had no cancellation of school.

Suzanne: Was that the same for you?

Ethel: We were usually called if the teacher couldn't get to school. If the teacher couldn't get there, you didn't have school; but then it depended on whether or not you could get there.

Suzanne: In the '50's did you ever have to cancel school?

Ethel: Yes.

Suzanne: How?

Ethel: We had a telephone in the school. We would call and have the parents come pick up the children if we were there and thought it was bad enough or they would call and say "Are we having school today?" And that was the teacher's decision then.

Suzanne: Ethel told me she didn't have much discipline problem.

If you ever got in trouble in school, what punishment did you get -- or were given I should say?

Ray: Back in those days I think the main punishment - there were alot of spankings back in the early '30's. But you either knelt in the corner on corn or went to the black board and the teacher drew a ring on the black board and you stood on your tippy-toes and kept your nose in the ring in front of the students for maybe fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes. I can't remember it really happening to me. And if you got spanked at school, you got spanked at home.

Suzanne: Did you have any discipline or punishments at your school?

Ethel: Yes, we had many more students and many of them were older at that time and we usually had a young teacher. My teachers were girls who had graduated from high school and had six weeks training. And the boys were sometimes as old as they were. And they caused alot of trouble at times. Sometimes the parents would be called to come take care of the situation or the small ones got spanked or they stood in the corner.

Ray: The size of the school was generally large. Usually twenty-five to thirty children in grades one to eight.

Ethel: There were twenty to twenty-five always in the one I went to.

Suzanne: Then you went down to teaching in one that has thirteen.

Ethel: Makes it nice.

Suzanne: Do you remember any types of tricks that were played on the teacher to get her goat?

Ethel: Snakes and dead mice in her desk.

Ray: Snakes - boys sneaking around behind the girls bathroom. Back then they were outside.

Suzanne: Did you have snakes in your desk?

Ethel: I was not afraid of snakes. We collected snakes for science so they knew I wasn't afraid of them. No, that didn't happen to me.

Ray: Oh, another thing they put tacks in chairs. I think it might still be done.

Suzanne: It sure is. What were some of the subjects you had? Was it different from what Ethel taught or was it basically the same?

Ray: Reading, writing, arithmetic.

Ethel: Kansas history, agriculture.

Ray: Not so much agriculture.

Ethel: We had a book that was Kansas Agriculture, and one that said Kansas History, geography book history book. We did not have science however.

Ray: Kansas history was a required subject.

Ethel: Yes, it was.

Suzanne: Did you have any special duties that you had to do. At one time they talked about students had to keep the fire up during the day. Did you have to do anything like that?

Ethel: The older boys were responsible for helping the teacher with that. We had a coal stove that sat in the corner. We also had to go to the neighbors down the road to carry drinking water. We had one bucket and one dipper and when that bucket was about empty one of the older boys would go back to the farmers house and bring another bucket of water. We did have assigned housekeeping duties - sweeping and dusting.

Ray: That was some of the punishment - sweeping and dusting. (Ray also talked about the school having its own pump and that there was one bucket and one dipper)

Suzanne: What are some special things you remember about your teachers?

Ray: There isn't anything special I remember. Probably the thing that sticks in my mind is that the teacher was always right. You were sent to school and under the full authority of the teacher and she was right. You feared the teacher. Not that they were bad people but they were feared.

Ethel: A lot of that came from home. You were told to do what the teacher says or else. I remember I liked mine very much. And especially one of the them was very musically and in the winter time instead of going outside to play we would stay in to sing during recess and noon. I really enjoyed that.

Suzanne: You could say that was one of the fun things you got to do?

Ethel: Right.

Ray: The fun things were the old box supper and the plays and skits the whole school would put on before Thanksgiving and Christmas. We would take a week out of school and practice this a week before Thanksgiving and practice your skit a week before Christmas.

Suzanne: Are you sad to see some of these things not occurring in the schools today?

Ray: I don't know if I'm sad. I think maybe there could be more togetherness like there used to be.

Suzanne: Do you remember any other fun things?

Ethel: It was always fun when I was younger to have the older children play with us and teach us games. I always enjoyed that being an only child and living in the country and not having any close neighbors. And they were always helpful in teaching the younger children to play the games. In school nowadays you don't see the eighth graders going down to help the first and second graders.

Ray: There might have been something to this fearing the teachers. It might have been the fact my dad was on the school board and he didn't want his children being the ones causing the teacher problems.

Ethel: I do remember when I was in first grade my teacher was paid \$36 a month.

Suzanne: Quite a difference from even when you taught.

Ethel: Yes

Suzanne: And a difference from now teaching.

Ethel: No zeros after it.

Suzanne: Do you remember where teachers stayed while they were teaching?

Ethel: They lived with families.

Ray: Usually with the Henry Fishers a mile and a half from school.

Suzanne: So you went to this red school house that is about thirteen miles north of town.

Ray: My dad engineered it. He and Freddy Hamburg and Mrs. Yoi.

(At this point the tape is hard to understand but Ray and Suzanne talked about a Mrs. Love who taught there at this time. Suzanne lives in Ellis and teaches in Falco and passes this school house every day. She is trying to make the connection of Mrs. Love with some of her students)

Suzanne: Where did you go to school?

Ethel: Black Jack in eastern Kansas.

Suzanne: How does it compare from when you went to school and when you taught in the one room schoolhouse?

Ethel: It certainly was more comfortable because where I taught it was modern. We had a furnace, we had running water and things like that, better school yard equipment. The teachers were better educated. The schools were smaller. The supplies we had were much, much better. When I went to school, we had our basic books and workbooks and that was it.

Ray: (This part is hard to understand but Ray talked about handing books down in the family.)

Suzanne: Do you have any last stories or anything you'd like to tell us about the one-room schoolhouse?

Ray: (Most of this is hard to understand)

My last teacher, my last semester in eighth grade was Wendall Keller.

Suzanne: That's interesting, I did not realize that he had taught school.

Ray: (This was all to low to understand)

Suzanne: I want to thank you both. This has been really interesting. I sure have learned alot tonight.