

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

Agnes Chandler Kenney
Interview On Her Teaching in
Boone County One-Room Schools,
1918-1928

May 8, 1988

From the
Kenney Family Collection,
Eva G. Farris Special Collections,
W. Frank Steely Library,
Northern Kentucky University.

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Kathleen: On what date did you begin teaching?

Mrs. Kenney: September, 1918.

Kathleen: How old were you then?

Mrs. Kenney: Eighteen years old.

Kathleen: How did you get to school? Your parents lived in Indiana. How did you get to Kentucky to teach?

Mrs. Kenney: The first year was at Verona. I boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Craven who lived near the school.

Kathleen: Was it the one-room schoolhouse at the top of Houston Hill?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes. It was on the left as you go toward Verona.

Kathleen: How many miles from your parents' home in Rising Sun, IN was this?

Mrs. Kenney: I have no idea.

Kathleen: Describe the inside of your first school. Did it have a blackboard and desks. What did the desks look like?

Mrs. Kenney: The desks were a small table and chair.

Kathleen: What did the teacher's desk look like.

Mrs. Kenney: It looked like the student's desk.

Kathleen: What did the children's desk look like?

Mrs. Kenney: They had an ink well on the top right side. The back of one desk was attached to the top of the next one.

Kathleen: Did you have a blackboard?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: How was the classroom heated? What kind of a stove did you have?

Mrs. Kenney: We had a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room.

Kathleen: Was there just one room?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes, one room.

Kathleen: How many students were in the room?

Mrs. Kenney: About twenty.

Kathleen: Were most of these students from farm families?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: How much did you have to pay for board with Mr. and Mrs. Craven?

Mrs. Kenney: \$5 a week.

Kathleen: What did you wear to school?

Mrs. Kenney: Just dresses.

Kathleen: You didn't wear pants to school, did you?

Mrs. Kenney: No, no.

Kathleen: What was your salary?

Mrs. Kenney: \$35.50 a month.

Kathleen: What subjects did you teach?

Mrs. Kenney: All subjects in all grades.

Kathleen: Did you teach reading and arithmetic?
Mrs. Kenney: Yes, Reading, writing, arithmetic.

Kathleen: Did you have art?
Mrs. Kenney: No. I taught physiology to the upper grades.

Kathleen: Was physiology like physical education today?
Mrs. Kenney: There was writing every day, spelling.

Kathleen: Did you have geography?
Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: History?
Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: In other words, you taught what would now be called basic classes. When you taught other grades, did older students help younger students with their work?
Mrs. Kenney: Not too much. If they wanted to, they could. Some did so.

Kathleen: Did the students behave?
Mrs. Kenney: The students then were good behaving children. There were very few who would have to be corrected.

Kathleen: What was the second school you went to after the one-room school at Verona?
Mrs. Kenney: East Bend.

Kathleen: Near where the CG&E power plant is now?
Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Whom did you board with there?
Mrs. Kenney: The Charles Bodie family.

Kathleen: Do you remember what your board cost there?
Mrs. Kenney: \$3.98 a week.

Kathleen: How did you get to their house from Indiana?
Mrs. Kenney: We lived directly across the Ohio River from East Bend. My Father or my Brother would take me across the river in the morning and come after me in the afternoon.

Kathleen: What kind of a boat did they take you in?
Mrs. Kenney: I think it was a fishing boat. They called them john boats. Sometimes they would come in a skiff, which was a little better boat.

Kathleen: Did you leave from North's Landing in Indiana and land at Piet's Landing in Kentucky?
Mrs. Kenney: We were up the river a little from North's Landing and opposite Piet's Landing in Kentucky. It was about a half mile from one to the other.

Kathleen: Did the school house at East Bend (across from the East Bend Baptist Church) look like the one at Verona?
Mrs. Kenney: It was about the same thing--a one-room school. It was a much larger school.

Kathleen: How many students were at East Bend?
Mrs. Kenney: Forty-five.

Kathleen: Do you remember any of their names?
Mrs. Kenney: I remember some, but if I began to name them, I would leave some of them out.

Kathleen: All three of the Bodie boys went to school to you, didn't they?

Mrs. Kenney: The two older ones. Carl was just five years old. Maynard and Wilbur were the two older boys.

Kathleen: From the house where you boarded, how far was it to the school?

Mrs. Kenney: Possibly a half a mile.

Kathleen: Did the students ride a school bus then?

Mrs. Kenney: The students walked; their parents didn't take them.

Kathleen: How long was your school year? When did it start?

Mrs. Kenney: We had an eight-month term.

Kathleen: Did you begin school after Labor Day and continue eight months?

Mrs. Kenney: Sometime in September; I'm not sure of the date.

Kathleen: How long did you stay at East Bend?

Mrs. Kenney: One year; I went to East Bend to be closer to home.

Kathleen: How long did you stay at the first school at Verona?

Mrs. Kenney: One year.

Kathleen: What school did you go to after East Bend?

Mrs. Kenney: It was a new building called Hume School at the foot of the hill.

Kathleen: Is it still standing?

Mrs. Kenney: It is still standing and used as a dwelling.

Kathleen: Is it by Green Mountain ballpark?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Was it one room also?

Mrs. Kenney: It was one room, but it was large enough to have a place to cook on one side.

Kathleen: Why would you have a place to cook at school?

Mrs. Kenney: It was for a cooking class. It was for the future, something that we thought was coming at that time. However, consolidation came and the rural schools were soon gone.

Kathleen: Who built the Hume School?

Mrs. Kenney: Mr. Craven and my Father.

Kathleen: That is why it is still standing; it was well built.

Mrs. Kenney: Probably. To modernize it, a coal bin was built on to the side, so you could just open the door, get a lump of coal and put it in the stove. You used to have to go outside to the coal house, which would be somewhere in the yard.

Kathleen: At East Bend and Verona, you had to go to the coal house?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Did you have to start the fire every morning?

Mrs. Kenney: No, there was an older boy in school who was capable, and he would build the fire in the morning.

Kathleen: Did he build it in the afternoon, too, or did it just burn itself out?

Mrs. Kenney: It just burned itself down.

Kathleen: Did all of the schools have outside bathroom facilities?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: There wasn't any running water anywhere?

Mrs. Kenney: O, no.

Kathleen: Did you have recess?

Mrs. Kenney: We had recess in the morning and in the afternoon, fifteen minutes each time.

Kathleen: The children played outside?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Did you have organized physical education, or did the students just play their own games?

Mrs. Kenney: They just played their own games.

Kathleen: Did they jump rope?

Mrs. Kenney: They jumped rope and played baseball.

Kathleen: After you were at Hume School, where did you go next?

Mrs. Kenney: I went to Beaver Lick.

Kathleen: How many rooms did Beaver Lick have then?

Mrs. Kenney: Two rooms. There was one room for the upper grades and one room for the lower grades. I had the first four lower grades.

Kathleen: Isn't the building on Route 338 as you go to Big Bone Park, about the fourth house on the right?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes. At that time U.S. 42 was not there. There was a road that came from Cleek Lane to Beaver Lick and up to Burlington Road.

Kathleen: Whom did you room with at Beaver?

Mrs. Kenney: I boarded with the Jim Sleet family in Beaver Lick.

Kathleen: Whom did you board with when you taught at Hume School?

Mrs. Kenney: Wilson's. Lon Wilson family.

Kathleen: How many students did you have at Beaver?

Mrs. Kenney: About twenty-five.

Kathleen: Did you have to go out to the coalhouse there to get the coal?

Mrs. Kenney: We had to go out to the coalhouse. One of the older boys would bring the coal in.

Kathleen: Was each one of these schoolhouses a district?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Boone County had all these one-room schools as individual districts then?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes. Each district had a Trustee--someone who lived in the district.

Kathleen: You had a superintendent at Burlington?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Was there a School Board at Burlington as we have now?

Mrs. Kenney: I don't think so.

Kathleen: Then the local Trustee was responsible for the school?

Mrs. Kenney: And the Superintendent.

Kathleen: Did the Superintendent come to visit the schools?

Mrs. Kenney: Once or twice a year.

Kathleen: You walked to this school too, as did everyone else. What school did you go to after you left Beaver Lick?

Mrs. Kenney: I went to Verona. It was a new school with a high school and all eight grades.

Kathleen: It was a new building in the town of Verona?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: What grades did you teach there?

Mrs. Kenney: First and second.

Kathleen: How many students did you have in that school?

Mrs. Kenney: Twenty-five, probably.

Kathleen: How was it heated? Did you have a pot-bellied stove there, too?

Mrs. Kenney: They had a furnace.

Kathleen: Was it a coal furnace?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Who took care of it?

Mrs. Kenney: They had a custodian. He took care of the heat and cleaning the rooms.

Kathleen: Did you have a Principal there?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Who was that?

Mrs. Kenney: I don't remember her name.

Kathleen: Did this school have inside bathroom facilities?

Mrs. Kenney: No.

Kathleen: What years were you there?

Mrs. Kenney: 1926 and 1927.

Kathleen: You were there two years?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes

Kathleen: How long were you at Beaver Lick?

Mrs. Kenney: Three years.

Kathleen: Do you remember how many teachers were at the new Verona School?

Mrs. Kenney: There were four grade school teachers, and each teacher had two grades. The high school had the Principal and another teacher.

Kathleen: Did they have school buses by this time, or did the students still walk?

Mrs. Kenney: They would walk or drive. Some of the high school students who lived a distance would drive.

Kathleen: They would drive? What would they drive?

Mrs. Kenney: A buggy and horse.

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Kathleen: Was there a place for the students to hook up their horses and buggies?

Mrs. Kenney: I guess they had a place to keep them. There weren't too many. There were a few who came on the train.

Kathleen: They rode both ways on the train?

Mrs. Kenney: I suppose.

Kathleen: Your new school at Verona was your most modern school?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Where did you go next?

Mrs. Kenney: I think I skipped one school. I went to Hamilton from Beaver Lick. It was a two-room school. One room had eight grades. One room had a Principal and another teacher for the high school. It was a two-year high school.

Kathleen: Did the Principal also teach?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: The school was near the Ohio River?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: I guess these students walked to school.

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Did any of them come in a buggy?

Mrs. Kenney: Not that I know of, unless someone just happened to come by.

Kathleen: Did you have a coalhouse there where you went outside to get your coal?

Mrs. Kenney: Some of the boys did that.

Kathleen: Then you had outside facilities for the bathroom at Hamilton?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: You went from Hamilton to the new school at Verona?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: You taught a total of ten years?

Mrs. Kenney: I taught nine years and was in school a year at Eastern Kentucky Normal School.

Kathleen: Why did you stop teaching?

Mrs. Kenney: I got married.

Kathleen: In those days, when you married, could you teach?

Mrs. Kenney: Yes.

Kathleen: Did you earn about the same salary at the last schools as at the first school?

Mrs. Kenney: No, the salary got up to \$90 a month. It had been increasing a little each year.

Kathleen: Did your board increase too?

Mrs. Kenney: No, at Hamilton I paid \$1 a day.

Kathleen: Whom did you board with there?

Mrs. Kenney: Mrs. Burrows.

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Kathleen: Where did you go to school in the summer?

Mrs. Kenney: Richmond, Eastern Kentucky.

Kathleen: Was it called a Teachers College or Normal School?

Mrs. Kenney: I believe it was called a Teachers College, but it may have been called a Normal School.

Kathleen: How did you get to Richmond, KY, when you went to school there?

Mrs. Kenney: On the train.

Kathleen: Did you get on at Walton?

Mrs. Kenney: I got a train at Aurora, Indiana for Cincinnati, Ohio. Then I went from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Richmond, Kentucky. We lived eight or nine miles from Aurora near Rising Sun, Indiana, so we had to drive to Aurora to get the train.

Kathleen: Anything else you would like to add in regard to the schools where you taught?

Mrs. Kenney: The Hume School near Verona was the last one-room school built, as far as I know, in this part of Kentucky.

Kathleen: When did the county school board come into existence? Around 1930?

Mrs. Kenney: It was before that. I'm not sure of the date. My husband was on the school board in the early 1930's. During that time, they began consolidating the schools. New Haven combined Beaver Lick and Union and graduated its first high school class in 1932. Hamilton was consolidated soon after that.