

Kansas City Kansan  
February 16, 1959

Just Lookin' Around  
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Drexel 1-0356

“Turn back, turn back, O time in thy flight and make me a child again just for tonight,” might well have been the theme for the Founders day program at Maccochaque school for this was the last such program that will ever be given in the school building.

And for this occasion the auditorium was crowded. Recent graduates as well as graduates of many years ago were present. And everyone wanted to capture something of the magic of the old days. For some that was in the 80s and on down thru the years.

A committee had spent a lot of time gathering information and history, and all this was written into the script of the “You Are There” program which was narrated by Mrs. A. C. Shipley. As she read, pictures were flashed on the screen.

In 1876 James E. Fisher, John W. Green, and Solomon Hogue built the first 1-room school.

There is a legend that an Indian chief gave the ground for the school, but there is no proof for this. Maccochaque is an Indian name meaning “Place of Refreshment.” The land was originally part of a land great from the Shawnee Indians to the State of Kansas, but was purchased from James Fitzpatrick for \$100. Miss May Beasley, the teacher, was paid \$25 a month and the boy hired janitor received \$1 a month.

In 1876 there were no automobiles and traffic problems. Instead the children heard droves of cattle and saw the dust as they were being taken to the stock yards.

To add a touch of realism at this point cow bells were rung by Gary Nutt and Colleen and Sharon Jacobs.

A letter was read from Kate Fisher Kittell whose father, James E. Fisher, moved from Kansas City, Mo., to the old brick home on W. 43<sup>rd</sup> and Fisher.

The first school was one long room and contained two long rows of wide wooden desks made of soft pine. They were not painted or varnished and the boys loved to carve their initials and strange pictures on the tops of the benches and desks. There were no modern improvements. There was no playground, but the children had fun at recess with the old fashioned games. The girls wore calico dresses, made to come down to the top of their high button or laced shoes. Their hair was combed straight back and held in place with a round rubber comb. Long braids were tied with ribbon.

There was no well in the school grounds and it was considered a high honor to be sent by the teacher to the spring on the Hogue place. This was several blocks distant and two children had to carry that water. There was one long-handled dipper and everyone used it. The water bucket was often passed down the aisle during school hours and everyone could have a drink.

Kate Fisher taught at Maccochaque from 1891 to 1893. A Mr. Meeks was principal for two years and in 1893 a Mr. McCoy was principal.

To go back a few years, in 1880 the school enrollment had grown and two more teachers were added. Still, there was no playground equipment, but the pupils had fun hunting quail and rabbits on the school yard. Apple orchards were nearby and stealing apples caused many a boy trouble.

A picture of the class of 1897 was thrown on the screen with 25 students and Mr. Altman the teacher. Then another picture with 52 pupils and three teachers – Mr. Altman, Miss Calbert, and Miss Barber.

Penick Johnson, who attended the anniversary, attended school in that first building, carried water from the Hogue place, skated on the Theis pond east of the school, and swiped apples for himself and the girls to eat at recess. The Johnson home was at 43<sup>rd</sup> and Hudson Rd., now Rainbow Blvd., and his father was on the school board with George G. Launder, Peter Johnson, George Prine, and Charles E. Kern. For a long time there was not enough money to pay a full-time janitor and Penick Johnson and his brother, Robert, swept the school every day after school and were paid \$5 a month. They tended the fire too, and that entailed making the pot-bellied stoves ready the night before.

At Christmas time the teachers bought treats with their own money – apples, nuts, and candy, and each child got a sackful.

Mr. and Mrs. George Prine taught Sunday school in the school building on Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Prine played the organ for school programs. The children practiced in the evenings and not during school hours.

The grand climax of each school year was the school picnic held at Marty's pasture, which is now the site of Rosedale high school and is known as Mt. Marty.

Pictures of later days were shown and then came the picture of "the new building" the present brick building.

The years seem to fly by. The first Maccochaque P.T.A. was organized in 1920. Mrs. W. D. Greene was president pro tem and Mrs. Mary Klepinger was the first elected president.

More pictures were shown, and how laughable old pictures are, but how sweet too. In 1932 a plot of ground on the south of the school was acquired for garden space. Two

hard maples on the grounds are a memorial to M. E. Pearson who retired after 46 years service in the city schools.

It seems a strange coincidence that one of the first teachers in Maccochaque was named Meeks and that Miss Hazel Meeks is principal now and will be the last principal of the school.

Thousands of children attended this school, and countless memories were awakened at the anniversary occasion. Times change and the Maccochaque school has graduated from the class of elementary schools and will now be a seat of higher learning, just as many of its students have progressed up the ladder of learning and living.