

Country schools a big piece of Gillespie's past

One day last week, I was searching for an article in the bound edition of the 1955 *Standard* when I ran across a notice listing all of the "School Closings" that would occur across the county in the coming weeks that year.

Because of the number of rural schools located in Gillespie County back then, school closings started as early as the end of April so that every rural school would have an opportunity to celebrate the end of the school year.

The first one on the list that year caught my eye since it was for the Doss School and I was an eighth-grade graduate of that far-northwestern Gillespie County school, having begun my education there in 1964.

Back in 1955, the students and teachers at Doss were the first to have their school closing — Saturday, April 30.

Also on the list were other Gillespie County rural schools and the dates of their "closings," including Pilot Knob and Wrede, both Saturday, May 7; Cherry Spring, Saturday, May 14; Morris Ranch and Luckenbach, both Sunday, May 15; Crabapple and Pecan Creek, both Saturday, May 21, and Rocky Hill, Sunday, May 22.

Each year, the schools rotated weekends on which each school had their end-of-school celebration.

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School closings were an end-of-year tradition and celebration for the students who had been practicing recitations, musical numbers and plays since Easter.

Not only were they a chance for the students to shine, but the adults were able to visit with locals as well as other friends they usually only saw once a year — at the school closing.

An advertisement for the Doss School Closing in 1955 listed the afternoon program beginning at 2:30 p.m., to be followed by a baseball game.

Time Pieces

By Sherrie Geistweidt



Each year, following the afternoon program, everyone would gather around the southern edge of the old "tabernacle" which stood where the Community Center now stands, to watch one of the Doss baseball teams play a team — usually from Fredericksburg or a nearby community.

Then, just as now, barbecue was to be sold for lunch and supper. The evening play was to be presented by the older students, and that year it was "Poor Married Man."

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School closings and rural schools are practically a thing of the past.

The Doss Consolidated Common School District is one of a handful of rural school districts still in existence in Texas today. The school rang its bell for the first time in 1884.

The students and teachers at Doss will be having their annual school closing picnic on Saturday, May 20 on the school grounds located in northwestern Gillespie County.

Just as over the last "umpteen years," all kinds of barbecue, including pork, beef, chicken and mutton for which purchasers drive miles, will again be sold by the pound 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Other items on sale include pinto beans and potato salad by the container, as well as bread.

Everyone is reminded to bring along a basket lunch or supper to go along with the barbecue.

Saturday evening, the students will present "Goldie and the Three Bears," a musical presentation written by Donna Dirksing, at 6:30 p.m., and winners of the prize drawing conducted by the Friends of Doss School, will be

announced.

The refreshment stand will be open for cold drinks, popcorn and other treats, and the Doss 4-H will hold a bake sale.

Additional activities Saturday include a farmers' market selling vegetables grown in the school greenhouse, a petting zoo, scavenger hunt, and washer and horseshoe pitching.

The school closing picnic is sponsored by the Friends of Doss School. Proceeds from the event and prize drawing are used to buy equipment for the school.

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At one time, Gillespie County had 38 rural schools.

In 1909, Gillespie County Judge Max Blum issued a booklet entitled, *A Booklet For the Public Schools of Gillespie County, Texas*. Three independent school districts — Fredericksburg, Harper and Willow City — were also included.

The rural common school districts were listed and included Bear Creek, Cave Creek, Cherry Mountain, Cherry Spring, Crabapple, Doss, Grape Hill, Grapetown and Honey Creek.

Also, Junction, Klein Branch, Klein Frankreich, Knopp, Line, Live Oak, Lower South Grape Creek, Luckenbach, Meusebach, Morris Ranch, Nebgen and Nebo.

And, Onion Creek, Palo Alto, Pecan Creek, Pedernales, Petersburg, Pilot Knob, Pocket, Rheingold, Rocky Hill, Squaw Creek, Stonewall, Tivydale, White Oak, Williams Creek, Wolf Creek, Wrede and Young's Chapel.

While many of these are no longer standing, some stand vacant, and a number of them are now community centers and are listed on the Friends of Gillespie County Rural Schools Trail and are open periodically.

This time of year, I'm reminded of this important part of our past.