

Watsonville's Class of 1920 celebrates 65 years

The blessed few of us
Who thus far have survived,
Should "tak a cup o'
 kindness yet,"
In thanks that we're alive.

And so if you feel able,
Or even if you don't
Please mark the day,
Send \$ to pay,
And we shall have a lark.

THE VERSE isn't from a book of old poems. It's taken from the invitation to the 65th reunion of the Watsonville High School Class of 1920, scheduled for Sunday at the Mansion House.

Marjorie Empson Holgerson, Marion Wright Ohrwall and Doris Johnston Martin hope to have a dozen members of their original class of 68 students at Sunday's event, the seventh one to date.

Before this year, they met in 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1975 and 1980. Twenty-seven of the class members are alive today. Seventeen of them responded to the invitation, three of them in verse.

Holgerson, Ohrwall and Martin — the organizing committee for the reunion — are among five of the Class of '20 who began school together in the first grade. The three still live in Watsonville.

Another charter class member, Anna Jorgensen Griffin, who also lives in Watsonville, plans to attend the reunion. The fifth, Helen Louise Langley Cobb, sent her regrets from her home in Houston.

"One woman wrote and said she couldn't come but that she was looking forward to the one in 1990," said Martin. "I'm sure this will be our last. That (1990) sounds like an eternity to me."

Martin said student life was much different for the class of 1920 than it is for the class of 1985.

It was accepted practice for teachers to smack students for misbehaving. Further, these same teachers were adored by their pupils, said Martin.

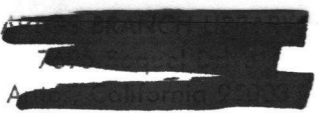
"A sixth-grade teacher whom we loved dearly used a strap on kids," she said. "Now, we'd be in court."

A first-grade teacher whom Martin said was "a very loving lady" used an eight-inch stick, the end covered in leather, to paddle small hands of errant students.

High school education in the early part of the century in Watsonville consisted of a four-year academic course and a two-year commercial course for older students.



Watsonville High School's Class of 1920, at left, when they were first-graders in 1907 at the Primary School. Below left, the Primary School, located on East Lake Avenue, just off Main Street. Below right, the Grammar School, on the corner of East Lake Avenue and Sudden Street.



REFERENCE

“When we were in grammar school (at East Lake Avenue and Sudden Street where the public library now stands), we had to walk to the high school for domestic science,” she said. “There were no phones, no school nurses — students walked home if they got hurt. There just weren’t all the frills we have now.”

Girls, if they were going to work, were expected to become teachers, nurses or secretaries, she said. Boys had a broader opportunities for their adult years.

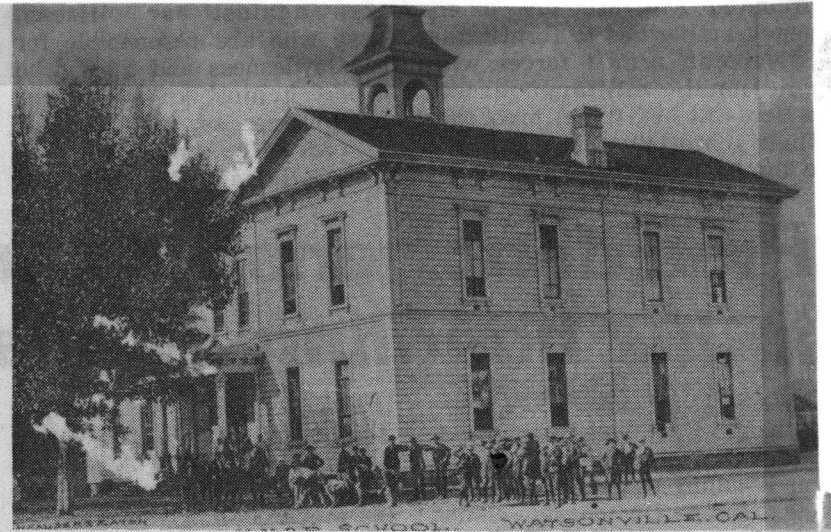
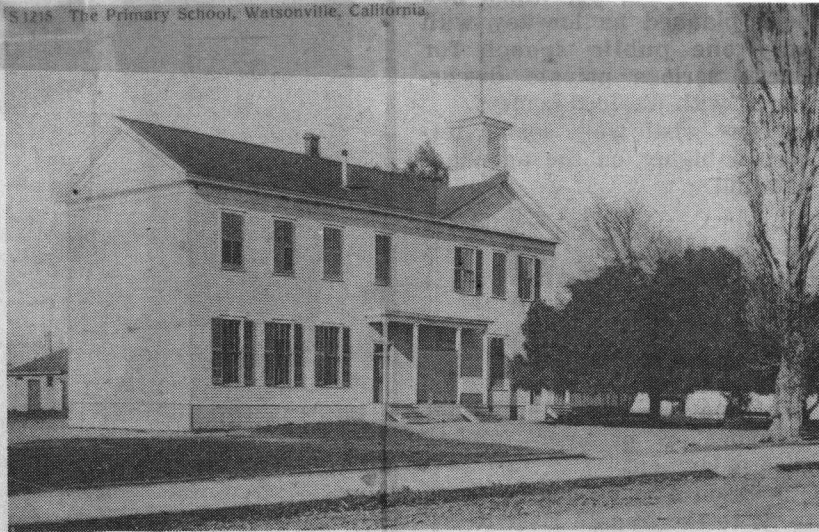
But all students were expected to help bring in money and to work for family, God and country, she added.

She recalled during World War I, the school calendar was adjusted to allow students to help harvest crops. The boys picked beans on Beach Road and made apple crates. The girls pitted apricots in the Aromas area and worked in packing sheds sorting beans and apples.

They also knitted and rolled bandages for the American Red Cross, then headquartered in the Lettunich Building.

Members of the Class of 1920 will have dozens of other memories to share when they gather for Sunday brunch.

S 1215 The Primary School, Watsonville, California.



Participants will include Anna Jorgensen Griffin, Mr. and Mrs. George Flath, Marjorie Empson Holgerson, Marion Wright DuFour Orwall, Mary Vail McShery

Wise and Doris Johnston Martin, all of Watsonville; Florence Rowe Carlsen and Ruth Hill Eckhart of Salinas; Nell Rickard Rookledge and her daughter of Pacific Grove;

Marian Rowe Conklin of Berkeley; and Mr. and Mrs. Archie McEwing of Sonoma.

Regrets have been received from Clara Schroeder Brower and Dr. Lloyd Smith of Watson-

ville; Louise Eltiste Carolan of Menlo Park; Eugenia Butler Longmate of Los Gatos; Max Wasson of San Jose; and Helen Louise Langley Cobb of Houston. —Lauren Comstock