

Running off the Teacher

In sixth grade, we had two teachers because the first teacher was run out. We started in the fall of 1928, when I was 10, with Miss Grace Edwards. Although it was common for teachers to be 18 and just out of high school, she was probably about 20, fresh out of the two-year teacher's college in Bloomsburg, eight miles away. She boarded at our house in what later became our guest room.

She seemed like a very nice person. She had some new ideas and some new rules. One of them was that students should be confined to the school grounds. We weren't used to that. I don't know if it was that rule or what, but some of the boys took a disliking to her. Byron Moore was the ringleader.



Byron Moore, 9, fourth grade, April 30, 1928.

Eckley Mills or his younger brother, Junior Mills, may have helped it along.

Even though he was a year younger than his sister, Emma, who was 11 and in my class, at 10, Byron was big and husky for his age.

When he got rambunctious, Emma tried to stop him, saying, "Calm down!"

It didn't work, and these boys began misbehaving.



Eckley and Junior Mills.



Byron Moore, 10, fifth grade, 1929.

At first, they just wouldn't stay in their seats. Then, if Miss Edwards wrote an assignment on the blackboard, they went up and erased it. Or they went up front, just messing around the teacher's desk.

This behavior got on her nerves. Because she was staying with us, we had to double up, and my bed was in my parents' room on the other side of the wall from hers. I could hear her crying in the night.

Before, when we weren't confined to the school grounds, we often played in the meadow next to the creek in the lilacs and other tall bushes, making "homes" and playing hide-and-seek and other games. These bushes always had suckers growing out near the base.



Emma Moore, 11, sixth grade, 1929.

In those days, all the boys had pocketknives. From these suckers, Byron cut switches and brandished them around Miss Edwards and threatened her. To my knowledge, he never hit her, but he could have. She was very afraid of him, and he knew it.

She was so worried about the next day at school that she became a nervous wreck. She got so she couldn't sleep. Through the wall, we could hear her sobbing in the dark. Finally, she couldn't take it any more. One weekend her parents came out from Bloom to visit. I don't know if she resigned or not, but she was gone just like that.

Byron's parents were Alf and Mary Moore who lived on the nearby farm that we later knew as Charlie Peterman's. I don't know why Miss Edwards didn't complain to Byron's parents. Maybe she was too fearful. My parents had both been teachers. Maybe they thought she had to work it out for herself. Maybe we should have reported it to the school directors. I guess we didn't think that far. Nowadays, we'd take more action.

Anyway, Bruce Derr was on the school board. He knew Lillian Kline had taught in Greenwood and asked if she would finish out the term. When she came, and we walked in, it was a different atmosphere. She was in control. She was in charge. There was no misbehaving. Mrs. Lillian Kline was older—maybe even in her late 20s.