

East Falls Past—School Days

The Fallser, September 2007, by Wendy Moody

In 1981, a group of local senior citizens met with gerontologist Cherie Snyder in the Falls of Schuylkill Library to share their memories of old “School Days” in East Falls. The session was taped. As school begins this month, we offer some of their recollections:

Note: The public school that preceded Mifflin School in East Falls was Samuel Breck School (located at Krail and Crawford Streets--*photo*). This was preceded by Forest School (“the old yellow school”) with the Old Academy preceding that.



What is your most vivid memory of school?

“I lived on Conrad Street and went to St. Bridget School. On winter mornings, we would put our school bags on top of Conrad St at New Queen, sit on them, and go down the icy hill to school.”

“School was not called off for snow back then. If you stayed home on a snowy day, you were labeled a “sugar baby” by your classmates.

“Public schools all over the city were pretty much the same. My son at Mifflin was taught to make Brown Betty. I was taught how to wash dishes (glasses first, pots last) and how to make mashed potatoes. I remember the smell of potatoes boiling – nothing ever smelled as good!”

“I remember a certain teacher who told all parents that their child was the only one who disrupted the class.”

I went to Mifflin School after Breck. At 6th grade we had the option of going to junior high or staying at Mifflin until high school. I went to Roosevelt Jr. High because this was the big thing at the time – you were one of the in crowd if you were away all day, didn’t come home for lunch, got carfare and took the 52 and 23 trolleys. After that you could go to Germantown or Roxborough High.”

“After Breck School was built, the old Forest School was used for grades K – 3. Breck was a typical red brick square building; there was nothing unique about it. The term was divided – Sept to Jan, and Jan to June. There were A and B classes to each grade, depending on

your birthday.” I went to summer school so I could pick up half a grade and be with my friends.”

“The community was so excited about the opening of Mifflin. It was built on the property where P. H. Kelly’s house was. The Mifflin PTA was very active and

earned so much money they had to give it to less-privileged schools. The rock garden was amazing with intricate paths.”

“In 5th grade we were given fountain pens and inkwells. We took a penmanship test and received a certificate. We were taught cursive with “up and down and around you go.”

“I was put into the Christmas play. I didn’t want to be in it and I stayed home “sick” until it was all over.”

“You had to “make the grade” to be promoted. If you didn’t you stayed until 16 and then got working papers”.