

Down Memory Lane

By Vin Bellew

WAVERLY SCHOOL...

The first Waverly School was not where it is now on Main Street and Bellew Avenue. Before the turn of the century the first Waverly School was right behind where the CVS Drug Store is now on Main Street and Tuckahoe Avenue in Eastchester.

My mother went to that school around 1890. It was a three story house, known as the old Borup house, tenants lived above the school. It had a lawn in front of it up to Main Street. It had three teachers and a principal. The principal's name was Mr. Quikley, an old Mr. Chips if there ever was one.

My mother would tell me that Mr. Quikley would hold school at night on the lawn to study the stars in the heavens. He had a telescope and the children would look through it to study the formation of the stars. He would also take them down Tuckahoe and Highland Avenue to study the life of the creatures in the waters of the reservoir. He would explore the woods and show the children the habitat of the fox, deer and other wild animal life. To the farms along California Road, the produce was studied and the milking of the cows.

The children had a live zoo and didn't know it.

Another teacher was the famous Bourke Cockran who taught at Waverly, but later was to become the head of Tammany Hall in New York City and a very close associate of Winston Churchill. He was a member of Congress and the greatest orator in the world. Churchill copied his style.

That little old Waverly school house might have gone only to the eighth grade but had a high school and college curriculum. The children went to school days and nights and loved it.

My mother learned so much about the planetets in the sky and retained it from Mr. Quikly and his classes.

She took her family at night out on the lawn when they were children and taught them the wonders of the heavens. We would find the Little Dipper, the Big Dipper, The Bear and other figures in the heavens. We took the moon apart and put it back together. With our own telescope we hunted for the man on the moon. She didn't see it happen, but we did.

Her education was not only books, but nature in real life and understanding. She left us with a little bit of that, but books are our diet.

The demise of that first little school house for the children living around Waverly came when there came an influx of stonecutters to work in the quarries. They came to Eastchester to live and brought their children with them, so there was a need for a larger school, and a larger school staff.

They built the new school in Waverly on Main Street and Bellew Avenue and with it a staff of new teachers. Mr. Quikley and his staff of teachers lived in Bellew's hotel on Waverly Square.

The hotel had a large room called the "Emmet House" after the great Irish statesman. At nights the teachers and friends would gather in the Emmet House and Bourke Cockran would spell bound them with his oratory. Cockran was a student of the great Edmund Burke of Irish fame.

In those early days Waverly was the only school in Eastchester, Wilmont School came a bit later. Waverly was to grow and expanded into a high school as well as the elementary school. Children from all over Eastchester and Tuckahoe went to the Waverly High School. Eastchester and Tuckahoe High Schools came later.

Perhaps Waverly School is the oldest in our town still standing. Closing in on a hundred years. The school is still being used by the school district for the little ones.