



School Busses

According to Robert Rice, the busses pictured here are 1931 Fords, which then cost \$1,275 each and held 32 children. The sides read "Boothbay Public Schools" and "Southport Public Schools." They are parked outside the Boothbay town hall which was moved up to The Railway Village in 1990.

Getting to school before the 1930s was a little harder in one sense—no busses; and a little easier in another—each part of town had its own school. There were also high schools at the Center, East Boothbay, and Barbers Island, but they were not four-year. Four-year high school at the Harbor—if Boothbay students were allowed to attend, which was iffy—was a travel problem. By 1929 and 1930 East Boothbay

student, Edith Dodge, Ginny Stapleford, remembers that she, Owen Luke, Laura Chapman, and Kenneth "Skinny" Dodge had an arrangement whereby Dick McDougall, who carried the mail, drove them to the Harbor, with GinnyLaura squeezed onto Edith's lap. But by 1936, those days were gone and Edith's sister Jean was taking a real bus back and forth.

The little Boothbay schools started to shut in 1920, including the one near Edgcomb at the entrance to the "Liberty" farm on the east side of Rte. 27, and the one at Dover, which was near Danny Giles's. In 1931 the one at the north end of Barbers Island near the Cross Road shut, as did the one on the River Road, near the turn to Pension Ridge.

The 1928 to 1931 Boothbay town reports show Owen Stover (of Dover), Gene Lewis (of Barbers Island), and Sam and Gene Woodward (of North Boothbay) paid to convey students, probably in converted trucks. Red Giles (born 1912) remembered the Gene Woodward homemade bus, but I'll be darned if I can remember what he told me about it. Red's sister Evelyn told me that besides Gene, his brothers sons Lawrence, Steiner, and John drove at times too. According to Clifford's 1960 history, in 1931 Gene Woodward bought a bona fide bus, the Boothbay one shown in the photo, while Walter Alley bought the Southport one in the same year.

The arrival of motorized transport meant the shutting of the

small stores and the small schools and consequent bussing. Motorized transport dealt another deathblow to the strong identification people had with the discrete, small villages and communities within Boothbay.

Photo courtesy of Carroll Dinsmore of Newcastle.

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Dear Editor,

Corrections to my caption under the school bus photo last week. I said Evelyn Giles told me that "besides Gene [Woodward], his brothers Lawrence, Steiner, and John drove at times too." Actually they were Gene's sons, and I apologize to all Woodward descendants and to my once (still?) good friend Evelyn for taking her words and twisting them all around like a pretzel!

If that wasn't bad enough, the same apology goes to Edith Dodge! We talked about the school bus photo, but the story I said she told me about driving to the Harbor to school with Dick McDougall was actually told to me by Ginny Spear Stapleford. And Ginny, who graduated in 1931, sat on Laura Chapman's lap, rather than vice versa.

The present Dick McDougall also remembered that, besides those mentioned last week, Mary Alice Vannah Fairley, Jane Montgomery Johnson, and Debbie Van Horn rode with his father too. The Kenneth Dodge I mentioned was nicknamed "Skinny," for those who don't remember him.

I usually doublecheck with people who've told me anecdotes before I put them in the paper—this time I didn't. Haste makes waste! Thanks to Evelyn, Edith, Dick, and Ginny for getting me back on the right track.

Barbara Rumsey

Margaret Kelly email Feb. 9, 2003

Now the real reason I was eager to write you was because yesterday my Jan. 30 Register arrived and I read your article about the school busses and I wanted to add my knowledge to yours. I was in high school from the fall of 1931 until the spring of 1935 and all those years the kids who lived in East Boothbay--at least the ones that started out as freshmen with us, (Sally Hodgdon, Eva Stevens and Thurlow Farmer) came by car and Lawrence Farmer drove the station wagon or whatever he had and the parents paid him to do this job. The Southport school bus went right by my house and most of the other kids' houses in West Harbor for four years and all of us in W.H. walked the two to four miles each way (depending on where we lived). All the kids on McKown's Point got a ride every day because the Superintendent of the Fish Hatchery had a truck and also kids in school so he took all the Adamses and Reeds and Dorrs to school. I sort of resented it when I was young but today I am so thankful that I had to walk those four miles every day because now, at 84, I can still walk straight and fast and do it every day. It helps of course to have long legs but they still work pretty well!

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