

A room full of memories

In 1966, Ada White Sharples reminisced about her first day at school in the Fort Mill Times.

Ada White was 6 in 1892 when Massey School opened on Doby's Bridge Road south of Fort Mill. The oldest children in her family had been instructed by their father, "somewhat haphazardly." Her three brothers closest in age to Ada had been instructed by Avie Kimbrell and Bess and Alice White in their homes. Again, instruction was haphazard.

Fort Mill Graded School was too far away. There were no school buses. The road was not paved and nearly impassable by horse and wagon in the winter.

Frank Massey had children to educate. He and the Ardrey family donated land for a one-room wooden school house, built of secondhand materials. In Mrs. Sharples' memory, the room was about 15 feet by 25 feet. There was a spring in the back, and parents furnished the wood for the stove.

The first teacher was Susie White, 18-year-old sister of Ada. Miss Susie had spent a week at the York County Courthouse taking examinations for a license to teach. Her students remember her

as a person of great dignity, whose word was absolute. When some of the parents requested that Latin be taught their children, Miss Susie, who had never studied Latin, began studying and preparing lessons for each day — one step ahead of her students. Her father, who had studied Latin in an academy, checked her lesson plans.

As was the custom in cotton-growing communities, school "took up" after cotton picking was finished any time from late November to January. School "let out" for spring planting and during the summer, generally from June through August, held another session.

The students ranged in age from Ada's 6 years to adults who had never attended school before. She remembered the names of some of



Nearby
history

LOUISE
PETTUS

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■ Students from age 6 to adult attended tiny Massey School near Fort Mill.

the students in 1892: her brothers, John, Bill and Sam White; Annie Huffman; Beulah and Wilson Crowder; Bessie and Emmett Felts; Gussie, Len and Herbert Patterson; Ada and Tom Bennett; Anna, Bessie and John Finneson; Maggie, Martha, Mary and John Murphy; Will and Newt Pettus; and there were others she could not remember.

There were fond memories of playing with schoolmates at recess and Massey sending the children a wagon load of watermelons several times a summer.

The school burned in 1904 and a bigger and improved school was built that had double desks replacing benches and a "writing table" that was only a board attached to the wall. The new school was painted green and the porch had a floor. Water came from a spring at the bottom of the hill. Sharples wrote, "Toilet facilities were unknown but the reservation of the area across the road for the boys and that in the bushes back of the building for the girls was strictly adhered to."

Massey School operated until 1929 when its former pupils were

able to board school buses and go to school in Fort Mill. However, the school was not abandoned. Black pupils went to school there and the building was also used for a Sunday school.

Today there are no traces of the old Massey School. The site is occupied by Doby Bridge Presbyterian Church with its brick construction with gleaming white trim, a far cry from the secondhand rough hewn original one-room schoolhouse.

Among the Massey School graduates were: Dr. Robert Lee, Baptist evangelist; Thomas "Tackhole" Lee, world champion sharpshooter; Earl Kimbrell, founder of the Kimbrell Furniture chain; and, Ada White Sharples, author and member of the first class to attend Massey School.

The congregation of Doby Bridge Church has erected a monument to honor the memory of the students, parents and teacher of the Massey School.

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Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays.