

# **MEMORIES OF VANDALIA**

By Roy L. Summers

Written for the Vandalia Community Preservation Association

Copyright © 2020

## MEMORIES OF VANDALIA

This is a narrative of memories from my youth at the tiny crossroads community of a place named "Vandalia," located in rural Owen County, Indiana, and the people and events that were a part in the life of this poor, country lad who grew up there.

In the early spring of 1944, my parents, Chesley and Stella Summers, and their six children (John, Ruth, Rose, Warren, Harry and myself, Roy Summers) moved from our home outside Spencer. Our new home in Vandalia was just five miles west on State Route 46, a short distance from the junction with Route 246. This move to Vandalia is the first recollection of events in my life.

For the first time, we would be living with electricity, as Rural Electrification had already occurred in parts of the country and that, in itself, seemed a magical and awesome thing. We could now simply flip a switch for instant light in a darkened room and no longer needed to carry a candle or kerosene lamp from room to room. It was a two-story house with stairs leading to two rooms upstairs.

The novelty of having close neighbors, a church and school within sight and walking distance, and a small filling station/store nearby made it seem as if we were living in a "city." Vandalia was a once-thriving community, with store buildings, churches, a saloon, and several houses, but time had changed it somewhat. There had been at one time a small post office, and even a rural delivery. Back in 1908, when my maternal grandparents had moved from Edgar County, Illinois, to a farm located on the Jordan Road, northwest of Vandalia, their address was Vandalia, Indiana. But the village post office closed in 1926, before my family moved there.

The centers of activity were the Methodist Church, which had a large and active congregation at the time of our arrival, and the one-room schoolhouse, which had eight grades taught by one teacher. In 1944, the teacher was Anna Townsend, who had once taught my mother in a Morgan Township school. Beginning in the fall of 1944, seventh and eighth graders began attending the Patricksburg School located in neighboring Marion Township, leaving only six grades being taught at Vandalia.

When I started school in 1947, Mrs. Doris Kaiser was the teacher, and there were eight students in first grade. Only two of us are still alive today. Vandalia was one of two schools located in Lafayette Township at that time, the other being Splinter Ridge. My second year of school brought Mrs. Clara Schmalz as the teacher. My third year, Miss Ethel Whallon taught and my fourth grade, which was also the final year for school at

Vandalia, was taught by Mrs. May Worman. Enrollment had dropped considerably after Lafayette Township students living west of the "Charlie Dubois Road" were bused to Patricksburg, rather than Vandalia.

There was no running water at the Vandalia one-room schoolhouse, and not even a well for drinking water. Each student needed to provide their own drinking cup and obtain water from a ceramic container located in the "cloak room" at the entrance to the school building. Outdoor toilets at the rear of the building were for "Boys" and "Girls." A hand bell signaled when school was to start, and when lunch and recess were over. A big pot-bellied stove in the center of the room provided heat, burning coal, of course. A coal shed stood beside the building.

Because our house was within walking distance of school, in nice weather we could walk home for lunch but were always in a hurry to get back in time to participate in the fun and games with the other students. Some of the outdoor games, in addition to softball and dodgeball, were "Handy Over," "Blind Man's Bluff," "Red Rover," "Sender," and "It is I." On rainy days more subdued games were conducted indoors. Reading aloud, spelling bees, reciting, doing "Times Tables," working math problems at the blackboards, and listening to lessons taught to the other grades kept us busy and taught us new things.

The Methodist Church stood across the road from the school and was quite a busy place. In addition to Sunday morning and Sunday night services, there were other meetings held: prayer meetings on Wednesday nights, "Brotherhood" once a month, choir practice, committee meetings, "Epworth League," rehearsals for special holiday programs, "Ladies Aide," and revivals. The Sunday School was under the guidance of the Sunday School Superintendent, and classes were taught for different age groups, which met in separate clusters around the church. A few of the names I recall were: "Primary and Beginners," "Junior Silver Stars," "Intermediate," and "Loyal Workers." The adult class had a name, too, and it may have been "Ever Welcome," but I never advanced to that level, so am not sure. We had "Promotion Sunday," "Communion Sunday," and other events, in addition to "Vacation Bible School," "Sunday School Picnics," and a variety of "Suppers." There were also Halloween parties, pageants and plays, songfests, and ice cream socials.

The Vandalia Methodist Church was in the Bloomington District Conference, and ministers were assigned by the Conference. The church was one of four churches in the Patricksburg "charge," which consisted of Patricksburg, Pleasant Hill ("Splinter Ridge"), Vandalia, and Mt. Zion churches, with Vandalia having services on first and third Sunday mornings and second and fourth Sunday nights. The "parsonage" (home of the minister) was located next door to the church at Patricksburg. It was a big job for the

"preachers" to travel from church to church and "tend to their flocks." The ministers that I remember were Rev. Swearins, who was followed by Rev. Ernie Philips; Rev. E. Eskew (who baptized me in 1953 in Fish Creek waters); Rev. William Self; Rev. William June Evans; Rev. Donald Conner; Rev. William Stevens; Rev. Jim Thompson; and Rev. Keith Hamilton.

The congregations elected Sunday School Superintendents, and the usual officials, including Secretary and Treasurer, Song Leader, Lay Leaders, and Communion Steward, were selected or "volunteered" as needed. Some of the Sunday School Superintendents were Basil Freeman, Harry Bowman, Stella Summers, John Small, Jim Litton, and E. J. Martin, among others. Changes occurred within the Methodist Church hierarchy through the years. The "Epworth League" became "MYF" (Methodist Youth Fellowship); "Brotherhood" became "Methodist Men"; and the "Ladies Aide" became "WSCS" (the Women's Society of Christian Service). But there continued to be active local church-centered groups, holding meetings with fairly good attendance through the years.

As many older persons in the community passed away, attendance dwindled at church services, leading to the eventual closure of the church. Fortunately, however, area residents worked tirelessly to get the church and the school on the National Registry of Historic Places to preserve what once was for the benefit of future generations.

Vandalia once had three churches. The Presbyterian Church had stood in what was our garden spot, located between our house and the old store building, and the Palestine Christian Church stood east of the village on what was the old road from Spencer (later known as "Hendershot Road"), where the Palestine Cemetery still exists.

The old store building continued to be a relic of times past, until it was torn down in the late 1950's. It stood at the crossroads of Spencer Street and Bowling Green Street, the two named streets in the "town." The Methodist Church and the Vandalia School were on opposite sides of Bowling Green Street. Route 246 was formerly Spencer Street, and was the road leading west to Patricksburg. The Vandalia Methodist Cemetery was located just west of our house and adjoined our property. The road leading to it ran behind the store building and our property, bordered on the south by a woods that we called "the 700" because someone had told us it was 700 acres in size. At that time, it was owned by someone named "Weber." It was our "playground" and a wonderful place to explore and to learn about nature and wildlife. We traversed the old roadways many times, gathered nuts and berries, hunted for mushrooms, camped out, and knew it inside and out. We felt it was destined to serve as our favorite place of adventure.

There were quite a few young people living in the nearby area surrounding Vandalia. Many attended the Methodist Church, and almost all had attended the one-room school at one time.

The roadways near to Vandalia may have had names or numbers, but we tended to call them by the name of the family who resided on that particular road, or by some landmark. There were not many side roads between Spencer and Vandalia, but two of them were named for the creeks they followed: Rattlesnake and Fish Creek. After the local post office was closed, mail delivery was from the Spencer post office for the residents along State Road 46 and Route 246, and from the Poland post office for those living on Fish Creek, the Hendershot Road, and State Route 46, north to Jordan Village. Thus, it seemed strange that our neighbors could live within earshot but have a different mailing address.

The filling station/store was built and operated for a few years by lifetime resident Everett Corbin, who later sold it to Bruce Doyle, who ran the place for the twenty years that I remember it. It had soft drinks and ice cream, candy, bread, sugar and other baking needs in limited supply, chewing gum, and tobacco. It was a handy place to stop in for a cold drink or an ice cream bar on a hot summer day.

## THE PEOPLE OF VANDALIA

I did not know everyone who lived in and around Vandalia, but we knew the names of most and where they lived. People moved in and out, and some did not stay for long. Many of the residents were related, or descended from "founding fathers" whose names were readily recognized, and the school bus route followed the roads daily, transporting the students who lived in the houses.

The road from Spencer had few offshoots at that time, and some of the people I became familiar with lived along State Route 46. A number of them had attended church at Vandalia, although the school district did not begin until the line between Washington and Lafayette Townships, just slightly west of the Mt. Moriah Church Road (which ran south off Route 46 and connected with the old Patricksburg Road).

At the top of Mt. Moriah Church Road lived an elderly widow, Olga Troth, and her nephew, Onnie Pearce. On the opposite side of that road, Raymond and Ada (Everly) Parks lived with sons Marty and Sonny. Ada, who had a number of siblings living around the vicinity, was a descendant of Tunis Everly, an early Lafayette Township settler.

Continuing west, toward Vandalia, on a farm with a long lane leading up the hill, south off of Route 46, lived the Bert and Ada Simpson family with Lowell, Paul, Kenneth, Bobby, and Gary. They were very active in the church, but moved shortly after 1944 to the Flatwoods neighborhood east of Spencer. Their older daughter Lois (Simpson) had married Ballard West, and daughter Maxine (Simpson) married Franklin Henson, a cousin of mine.

Continuing west, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stewart lived on the north side of the road, operating a syrup-making business, producing and marketing concentrated fruit syrups that, when mixed with water, resulted in delicious drinks—a precursor to Kool-Aid. On the south side of the road lived Chester and Naomi White, a nephew of Everett Corbin, with children Bonnie and Ernie. They moved shortly after to be nearer to Spencer, and Troy and Maxine (Hight) Breeden, with children John and Jane, moved into the place.

Next came the "Beacher Knight" place, which at one time was inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. John Buck. Later on, the MacMorran family lived there. On the north side of the road, up a very steep hill, lived Orville and Thelma (Troth) Haltom, Eileen and Lowell. I remember that Lowell had an old grey mare named "Daisy" that many of the children rode bareback at one time or another.

Then came Fish Creek Road, leading north to Atkinsonville. Henry and Thelma Gillum lived nearby with daughter Janet. Mrs. Gillum was very instrumental in developing the first 4-H club in the area, with the chosen name of "Loyal Workers" (taken from the Methodist Sunday School class with the same name). It became one of the leading and most active clubs in Owen County, boasting a large membership and including youth from a wide area. Mrs. Gillum was a pianist, who encouraged participation in musical productions by the 4-H club members, as well as sing-alongs and ice cream socials.

On the south side, next came the Jim and Evelyn (Everly) Wallace farm with Jimmy, Gary, and Barbara. Evelyn was a sister to Ada Parks and Flona Query and others living in the Vandalia vicinity.

The Hendershot Road branched off of Route 46 at a juncture opposite the Wallace farm. It was the original road before Route 46 was reconstructed to avoid the steep hill that led to Vandalia. Alva Williams lived on the north side of the road, before coming to the original log house that had been the home place of the large Powell family. Link and Hazel (Powell) Hendershot lived in the house where Hazel was born, along with their children Norma, Leonard, and Dwight. Dwight was my earliest playmate and best friend, starting school at Vandalia together and later graduating from Patricksburg together. From time to time, other relatives lived with them: Grandpa Hendershot, Uncle Howard Hendershot, John Powell, (Hazel's brother); and many nieces and nephews, including Phyllis and Lloyd Gerald Anderson, often spent summers there, enjoying the cool swimming hole of Fish Creek, running nearby and providing a cool, shady spot for many of the youth to enjoy the flowing water.

The former Palestine Christian Church was located at the top of the hill, along with the cemetery. That old road met up with the new Route 46 on both ends, but was no longer opened to traffic and became a local "Lover's Lane" parking spot in later years.

Back on to the south side of the State Route beyond the Wallace farm, Leonard and Katy Jennings (along with children Jeffrey, April, Billie, and Willy) built a home across from the Jennings home place, where Bill Jennings and Iva (Newport) had raised their family, and which was later inhabited by their son, G. W. and Anna Jennings and family (Jackie Hogan, Steve Hogan, Danny Hogan, and Jean Jennings).

Iva (Newport) Jennings was a member of the Newport family who had the "Famous Newport Shows" that traveled around the country using the Vandalia home place as their winter quarters. As a widow, Iva built a small home on the Ressler Road, and she often walked to church at Vandalia, carrying her guitar, which she played while she sang songs she had written as "special" songs for church services. Her guitar was nearly as big

as she was and it wasn't unusual to see her, with a quick step, walking along the roadside.

Carl Ressler lived alone and farmed on the Ressler Road. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ressler, had lived there for many years. Carl allegedly won a Purple Heart in WWII. The road originally went through to meet the old Patricksburg Road, but ended at the Ressler property when we lived at Vandalia. Other houses had existed on the same road, but only one other existed during my memory. An eccentric named "George" lived in a rather unusual dwelling near Wolf Hollow, and I recall that he once showed me the spring where he got his drinking water at the mouth of what was known as "Wolf Cave."

In the early 1950's, Roland and Doris Tucker built a house on the east side of Route 46, just before entering Vandalia, where they lived with their son, Paul, for a few years. Later the Charles Honn family lived there with sons Dick and Eddie. At that time, the next property was purchased by Bruce and Velma Doyle, along with the filling station/store. Sons Bob and Pat came with them. Older son, Jim, owned and operated a filling station in Patricksburg for a number of years. Bruce tended the store for many years and was well known throughout the vicinity. The block house across the road to the north of the filling station was purchased by Velma (Mundy) Doyle's sister, Flossie (Mundy) and George Ellis, but it was not renovated until purchased by Charles and Mary Erwin in the late 1950's.

In Vandalia "Proper" at the junction of Route 46 and 246, Kenneth and Helen (Hopkins) Newport (with children Rose Irene, Jerry, and Linda) lived on the south side, next door to Everett and Francis (Huber) Corbin and children Rosemary, Donald ("Dick"), and Dorothy. Everett was jokingly known as the "Mayor of Vandalia," and was Lafayette Township Trustee for 16 years, as well as a landowner and farmer, stock hauler, and long-time resident of the township.

Across the street from Everett and Frances Corbin an elderly widow, Ida Long, lived for a few years. After her death, the house was occupied by Parley and Ina (Norman) Huber. Parley was an uncle to Frances Corbin. After his death, Ina lived there alone for several years. She was a most unusual woman. Crippled from birth by a shorter leg, necessitating a "steel shoe" to make her legs the same length, she walked with crutches all her life. She was widely known and much loved by all who knew her.

Next door to the Hubers lived George and Nellie Ruth (Fiscus) Powell with sons Herman and Harold. The Powell family had moved to Vandalia in 1926, with George appointed to become the Postmaster, only to learn after their arrival that the local post office was closing. George was a brother to Hazel (Powell) Hendershot and to Roxie (Powell) Williams, who also lived in Vandalia. Nellie Ruth (Fiscus) Powell was a long-time school



teacher, having taught at the Vandalia School, the Fish Creek School, the Rawley School, and at Patricksburg. The Powells owned additional lots in Vandalia, and always planted a big garden. In later years, Mrs. Powell's brother, Jasper Ray Fiscus, made his home with her. They found many arrowheads in their garden through the years, as the flat land on the Vandalia hill had been an Indian campsite years before.

The old store building (actually two separate buildings joined together) was no longer a business after we settled in Vandalia but was instead a private dwelling, lived in by Charles and Mary Mayrose. Only one son lived there with them at that time, though they had several other children. Clarence "Mag" Mayrose was in eighth grade when we moved there, but he left home and Mr. Mayrose lived there, mostly by himself, as his wife worked away. He raised chickens under the building, which was high off the ground at the back part and was almost high enough to stand. He was so patient with my exuberance and inquisitiveness and taught me about a lot of things. He collected nuts and berries, ginseng, hunted squirrels and rabbits, and had an old yellow cat that was his constant companion.

After the Mayrose family left Vandalia, the old building was rented to several other residents. Noel and Mabel (Beatty) Williams, with their children Darrell, Janice, and Sharon, lived there for several years. One side of the building was rented to Hearel and Erma Bault (who later built a house at the beginning of the Mangus Road for their expanding family, Donnie, Patsy, Sharon, and Gene). A Monday/Cook blended family lived there for a short while; Charles and Marjorie (Peyton) Mayrose moved in for a time, and Fred and Audrey (Johnson) Peyton, with daughter, Sandra, lived there.

The old store was vacated and torn down in late 1950's, with some of the lumber used to build the Nazarene Church in Freedom. The village post office was located in a small building on the west side of the store building at the time it existed, but was long gone before the mid-forties when my family arrived.

Our new home was previously owned by Frank and Grace (Beaman) Sims, who had lived in Vandalia for several years. It was the westernmost house in the "town," with a view of the Methodist Church and the school from the front door. Traffic passing to Patricksburg provided frequent vehicular noises, and the Cemetery Road behind our house ultimately led to the Herman ("Mutt") and Roxie (Powell) Williams farm. Roxie Williams was a sister to Hazel Hendershot, and to George and John Powell. Wilma, the youngest Williams daughter, was living at home in 1944. After the Williams farm was sold, following the death of Roxie, the home burned to the ground. The property was unoccupied for a while before being purchased by Emil and Bonnie Soix, who rebuilt on the site and were raising grandchildren, Ronnie and Hila Jean Wells. The most recent homeowners that I remember were Alger Jones and friend.

The Laymon log cabin was the next house west of Vandalia on Route 246. Then came the hilltop home of Emma Corbin and her niece, Ethel Mae Knox. Emma Corbin later moved to the Vandalia house where Kenneth and Helen Newport lived, married Orville Modesett, and the Newports moved into her former home on the hilltop.

Ethel Knox married Walter Query, a son of Clyde and Flona (Everly) Query, who lived on the original Walter Scott Everly place on the Macedonia Cemetery Road, along with children Frances, Walter, Virginia, Junior, Marvin, Jack, Oran, Max, Leland, Patty, and Donnie. Flona Query was a sister to Ada Parks, Evelyn Wallace, and Emma Bonnewell, whose family lived further west, on a curve in Route 246. Alice (Everly) Straly was another sister who moved to the Vandalia neighborhood at a later date.

Also living on the Macedonia Cemetery Road, in a newer house beside the cemetery, was the Kimberling-Guthridge blended family, Evelyn, Joan, and John Kimberling, along with Ralph and Gayle Guthridge. Then, on a farm at the end of the road, Archie and Genevieve Gillow resided with their children Lonnie and Ann. Archie was a long-time barber in Spencer.

At the beginning of the Macedonia Cemetery Road, on the south side of Route 246, Roy and DeEtta Cross and children, Daryl, Glenn, Dorothy, Dean, Lela, and Lola, lived in a big two-story house.

Farther west, on the original Troth family farm, lived John and Jewel (Sumner) Small, and daughters Donna and Shirley. John Small was a much-admired, charismatic man, very active in the Vandalia Methodist Church. He was accidentally killed in a tragic mishap when his team of horses bolted and he was thrown from the wagon they were pulling. That house has been restored and expanded in recent years and has become quite a showplace.

The next road north off of Route 246 was known as the "Charlie Dubois Road." That family had a farm there, and their son Norvin and daughter Wanda both attended the Vandalia School. Also on that road lived Ralph and Leona (Malicoat) Boler, along with children Stanley, Delores, and Gerald, although their place was actually in Morgan Township, as the road continued north to meet State Route 46. Ralph Boler died at an early age from a heart attack.

Back on Route 246, the Gerald Coley family lived on the north side. Wayne, Raymond, John, and Fred Coley and their parents lived there for as long as I can remember. Beyond the Coley place, on the next big curve in the road, the Chester and Emma (Everly) Bonnewell family (Elizabeth, Bob, John and Bill) made their home in the house

that was very close to the road and always seemed to be in danger of vehicles running into it.

In the remaining flat land, before the high hill leading to Patricksburg, back a long lane to the south, a Mendenhall family lived for some years. There were three daughters, Betty Jo, Marilyn, and Jane. After that, a Williams family moved there, with children Bill, Jim, Jane, and Terry. Then, on the opposite side of the road, Kenneth and Helen Newport relocated their family, including youngest, Eddie (moved from the Corbin hilltop house to the property called the "Al Brand place"). Kenny Newport drove the school bus for many years.

That was the end of the properties where students attended Vandalia School, at least as far as I can remember. From that point on, they were bused to Patricksburg, although, I believe, at one time some students who lived farther west (still in Lafayette Township) came to school at Vandalia, but none after 1948, so far as I recall.

Within Vandalia "Proper," beside the church, lived Ervin and Ona (Anderson) Randall, Otela, Mary, Betty, Paul, Rex, Jim, Leonard, John, Shirley, Marjorie, and Ronnie. A younger daughter had died shortly after we had moved to Vandalia. She was just a small child, and six of the teenaged girls from the church congregation served as pallbearers for the little casket. Strange how some things remain in our memories!

Then, on Bowling Green Street, north of the Randall residence, Henry and Dorothy Thomas moved in, with children Dorothy and Wallace. An older son, Fred, and his wife, Betty, built a house and garage, where Fred operated a mechanic shop, just northwest of Vandalia.

Also on Route 46 northwest of Vandalia, where the curve occurred, lived Marcus and Ruby Thomas, with children Paul, Barbara, and Stanley. After they moved to Spencer, the house was purchased by Lorna (Nelson) Snapp, a young widow (with small children Mark, Marvin, Susan, and Dana). Mark Snapp became very influential in the development of the Vandalia Community Preservation Association, which has worked to save the church and school from being destroyed.

Beside the former Marcus Thomas and Snapp home, Roscoe Close and his wife, Irene (Bault) Close, and daughter Roseanne, built a house in the mid-50's and moved from where they formerly lived on the Mangus Road. Irene was a sister to Hearel Bault, who, as previously mentioned, built a house at the entrance to Mangus Road. Other residents on Mangus, which in the "Olden Days" had gone through to Atkinsonville and has now been reopened to traffic, included Gale and Avis Newport, who lived where Tom and Dottie Hamilton remodeled and moved with their children, Charles and Susan. Also,

property occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Morg Simmons, with family members Floyd, Jane, Wallace, Bonnie, Phyllis, and Orié, was located there. A nephew, Richard Berwig lived with them when they attended school at Vandalia.

Traveling farther on the Mangus Road, Ben and Virginia (Trimmer) Wilkinson, with children Nancy, Linda, Rebecca, Benita, and Jim, restored the original house and made a productive farm from their sometimes difficult-to-get-to property. The final house on the road at that time was the home of Blair and Marie Mangus. Hence, the name of the road was "Mangus."

The Vandalia community extended northwest on the road toward Bowling Green, and there were several families, even beyond Jordan Road, who came to participate in church and 4-H activities there. Some of the most faithful churchgoers lived a short distance from Vandalia.

Houston and Willie Johnson, with children Kenneth, Judy, and Wilma, were regulars, as were Lester and Myrtle Orr, who often entertained grandchildren during the summer months. Asa, Madge, and Judy Falls lived very near the Jordan Road, and some of the families along Jordan Road sometimes came to events at the church. E. J. and Frances Martin, Danny, Marvin Jane, Tressa, and Johnny, previously lived on Fish Creek, but relocated to Jordan Road. The Ernest and Jessie Evans family, including Lois, Jerry, Larry, Lynn, Junior, and Donnie, were very much a part of the church, and Jessie Evans became the 4-H club leader for several years. Their neighbors, closer to the Clay County line, Herschel and Iva Barker and their children Eugene, Ruby, Roland, Bob, Shirley, and Rhonda Sue, became involved in church and social activities, too.

With the 4-H club being so active and sizable, many of the youth were especially attracted to the number of activities involving the members, especially during the summer months and the county fair. Virginia Wilkinson was also a club leader, and some of the older youth became "Junior Leaders," helping with the younger members. The Vandalia schoolhouse was the setting for most meetings, and for many of the activities that took place.

There are many other persons who lived and worked in the Vandalia neighborhood. Of course, people moved in and out of the surroundings, but for the most part, residents tended to come to stay. It was not a common sight to witness a new house being built, as money was hard to come by in those years.

The old road that was once the southern extension of Bowling Green Street past the store building in Vandalia was not in very good condition, and next to impossible to drive through. But it made a fine walking trail, and Everett Corbin often drove farm

equipment through to a farm he owned at the end of that road, which the Corbin family often referred to as "the other place" (located near the Albert Tucker farm, which early settler Tunis Everly had homesteaded). In more recent years, that road (running south between Route 246 and the old Patricksburg Road) was reopened, but I don't know if it is actually in a condition for traffic to drive on. There is a gravesite on a little knoll at the bottom of the hill where an early resident was buried on his property. Captain James Robinson was buried in a single grave, surrounded by barbed wire the last I remember, and a lone cedar tree was growing up from the center of the grave. I often wonder if it is still there and doubt that I could locate it after nearly 60 years.

Six of us Summers kids lived to maturity at that home place, some for more years than others, and we all attended the Vandalia Methodist Church. My sister Rose married Herman Powell in the church, and my brother Warren was also married to Mary Brandt there. Nieces and nephews went to the church when they visited our home and fondly remember waking up to hear the church bell. Four of us attended school at Vandalia.

Our family was a "military family," as four boys, three brothers-in-law, two nephews, and a niece served for a combined total of over 100 years of service in the United States military, including all four branches. In 1964, my mother, who was a recent widow, decided to sell the place and move into a rental in Spencer. The buyers were Walter and Olive (Huber) Blair, who were in-laws to Ina Huber and Aunt and Uncle to Everett and Frances (Huber) Corbin.

We enjoyed a good upbringing in Vandalia, and the memories of the time spent in that community, and the people who were a part of our lives, have lasted.

--Roy Summers, Piqua, OH, May 2020



When we moved to Vandalia we had electricity for the first time. This was our electric pump. Notice that it also had a pump handle for when the electricity wasn't working (a frequent occurrence). Our smokehouse wasn't a very scenic backdrop for photos (this one taken around 1945). Rover was quite old and I was young. However, the photo shows the back of the old store building(s), and you can see the different roof heights. In the vacant lots between our house and the store the Presbyterian Church and a small building for the Post Office once stood.



Dwight Hendershot and me at the church door, maybe 1946.



Me (left front) with my first grade classmates (Robert Haysley, Dwight Hendershot, Norma Keith, June Dubois, Shirley Randall, Marjorie Randall, and Donna Small) at Vandalia, 1947-48. Mrs. Doris Kaiser was our teacher.



Mrs. May Worman (the final teacher at Vandalia) standing in the doorway of the schoolhouse in 1951.



This road sign was at the point where our lane joined Highway 246, and the front of the old store building is just visible on the right. This was where Bowling Green Street crossed Spencer Street. Nellie Powell's house is on the left and Everett Corbin's house is on the right, with a bus parked in front (likely taken around 1953).



This shows the front of the old store building as it was being demolished, about 1956. It can be seen that there were actually two buildings joined together.



Taken in our front yard (perhaps 1953 or 1954), this shows the church and school. The latter is nearly hidden behind the evergreen trees on the right. Highway 246 is behind me. Both buildings were visible from our front door, so we knew when something was going on! The spreading tree on the left is near the site where "The Famous Newport Shows" made their winter quarters. It was a traveling carnival-like sideshow, operated by the Newport family of early Vandalia (the parents of "Ivy" Newport Jennings and "Theo" Newport).