

FROM SALLY GRAVENOR

Sally Gravenor  
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### THINGS I REMEMBER ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE HENLY COMMUNITY

The first thing I can recall was when the wooden school house burned in 1930 leaving the community without a meeting place. The school house was used not only for school but for the Methodist and Baptist Churches who took turns meeting on different Sundays.

A new concrete building was erected that contained one large room that could be divided to form two rooms. At one end was a stage and going through a door would lead to the library and then thru to another classroom. All classrooms had what was referred to then as a 'cloak room'. This room was used mainly for hanging coats and a place to keep your lunches but it was also used as a room for punishment.

There was a well outside and two toilets, one for the boys and one for the girls. Our winter heat was furnished by two large wood burning stoves. There was a large stack of wood outside that not only served as a source for wood but was also used by the girls as a playhouse and the boys like to use it as a fort. There was an outside generator that could be used for light and was also used when needed to play basketball.

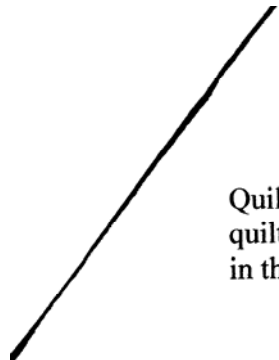
Activities for the school were basketball, volleyball and baseball. We were in competition with the local schools such as Mr. Gainor and Dripping Springs. We would go to County Meet in San Marcos to take part in all the sports and literary activities.

At Christmas time a very large cedar tree was erected on the stage and usually Santa Claus made an appearance. A fun raiser was having a box supper. All the ladies made a lunch and tried to see who could make the prettiest box and inside provide a picnic lunch. Of course it was supposed to be a secret who's box it belonged to but usually it was leaked so the boyfriend would know which box to bid on.

The school was made up of a principal and two teachers. As there was no houses for rent in town many rented a room from one of the parents and they became like family. In 1940 the trustees decided to close the school and transfer the students to Johnson City. Students still attend there at the present time.

One year when the government had excess cotton the material was given to the community to make a mattress for each family that applied. It was a lot of work but everyone pitched in to help. For many it meant the first time in their lives that they had a real mattress.

A favorite activity for the ladies was a quilting 'bee' not only a social time but a time to meet the needs of a family that needed winter bedding.. Stock and chicken feed at one time came in colorful feed sacks. This material was highly prized not only for quilting but also to make dresses and aprons. It was really special when you could purchase several sacks of the same material and that opened all kinds of possibilities.



Quilts were made for warm bedding and gifts for special occasions. Most ladies had a quilting frame that could be lowered from the ceiling and there several ladies would meet in the afternoon and quilt while exchanging a bit of gossip one might know.

Old Henly consisted of a large wooden store that housed groceries and was also where the post office was located . A gin was located there as well as a couple of houses. When the new highway came through the old Henly was gone. The post office was moved and operated until the Lyndon Johnson administration closed it. The old section that held the mail is installed in the Henly Church.

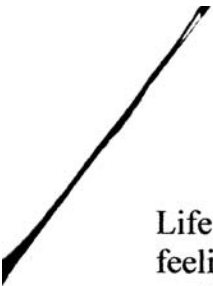
Two news business sprang up, a garage and mill and a grocery store that would house the new post office. It was also a gas station and feed store. A barber shop occupied the land between the two buildings. The mill was a favorite place to be on Saturday afternoon. You brought your corn to be ground into cornmeal and maybe a game of horseshoes or washers. You could also purchase kerosene that most people used to light their lamps and start a fire . A wood heater or fireplace was the only source of heat in the winter and the wood cook stove was used during the hot summer to put up the produce that was grown in the summer.

Canning was a busy time for everyone. Beans, corn, tomatoes, black eyed peas as well as the fruit such as peaches, plums and dewberries. Many people used a pressure cooker to can the produce and some had a canner which used a can and then was sealed.

Winter brought its share of work also. One or two hogs were usually killed during the winter months and processed in the smoke house so as to preserve the food. Hams and bacon were packed in salt and sausage was made and the links were hung on poles in the smoke house for about a week until they were cured. You could only use smoke for the meat and that meant that someone had to get out of bed at night to be sure the fire was burning just right to make smoke.

Also taking place during the summer was "haying" time. It was the custom for neighbors to help each other . Men and boys came from neighboring homes and worked until the hay was baled. The women gathered to make a lunch for the men that usually consisted of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, any vegetables that was in season and several kinds of cake and pie. After a brief rest the men were back in the field to finish.

At one time Henly was famous for their tomatoes. A packing shed was built that still stands. Farmers would bring their tomatoes and produce there to pack in bushels baskets where a couple of men that had large trucks would pick the produce up and transport to either Austin or San Antonio. Families made a little extra money any way they could. Selling eggs, milk and butter was one way. In the fall many raised turkeys to sell at Thanksgiving time.



Life was hard during this time. Many families had little money . But there was always a feeling of community. Kids made up their own games and the grown-ups had house parties and played 42. Ice cream socials and ring game parties were held. Ring games were somewhat akin to square dancing.

Quite frequently a death occurred in the community. Many times a long illness required that someone stay with the sick during the night. Many took turns doing this and when death would come someone stayed in the home with the body until it was time for burial.

Many in the community had a firm religious belief. After meeting in the school house for years the Baptist decided to build a church. Two acres of land was purchased near New Henly and construction was started in 1939 and with all volunteer help a new church was completed a few months later. This building was the place for church as well as other social gatherings.

World War Two came and passed and that brought the end to the town of Henly. A new four lane highway came through. First the garage closed, then the barber shop. A few years later the post office was gone and then the grocery store. All that is left now are the memories that many of us recall as a happy time when we were young and lived in an uncomplicated time.