

Oral History Excerpted Transcript of Ichabod Crane Schoolhouse Alumni

Interviewee: Florence Weidman Liljedahl

Interviewer: Sharon Palmer

Recorded at Ichabod Crane Schoolhouse April 25, 1986

(“F” represents Florence, “S” represents Sharon)

S: I'd like to start by asking you, where did you live?

F: I boarded right here at the Van Alen House for about 10 years.

S: With whom? Who lived there at the time?

F: People by the name of Herrick and Mrs. Herrick were descendants of Luykas Van Alen.

S: I know the house was in the family for about eight generations...Did they have any children of their own going to the school?

F: No, they were all much older than I was.

S: You boarded there with your sister?

F: Right. Her name was Laura, about a year older than me.

S: So how did you get to the Schoolhouse up the road?

F: Well, we just walked across lots, we didn't have to go on the road, we would just cut across.

S: So it was only about a quarter of a mile. What about in really severe weather?

F: Well, in really severe weather, we'd watch to see if the teacher, who lived in the village, came down and if she was walking down then we'd come across the lots the same as usual. If she didn't make it through the snow we'd stay home and have a day off.

S: And that was Ruth McCagg?

F: That's the one I remember, Ruth McCagg.

S: What were the years you were here?

F: Well, let me see, I think I probably started in 1919, something like that.

S: And you went here for about six years?

F: Seven years.

S: So you and Mary Louster went to the high school together and you graduated in Kinderhook. What year did you graduate?

F: 1929. I can remember that!

S: That's a date we all remember...You remember [the schoolhouse] looking pretty much like this late 1800's picture...no trees or bushes right around it? (F shakes her head.) ...No bushes or flowers?

F: I don't remember any. Except for one beautiful, sunny, early summer day, when we had to go outdoors for you-know-what, there were some beautiful flowers blooming and I stopped to pick some, which I shouldn't have done, of course. The teacher rapped on the window and motioned me to come back in.

S: She kept an eye on you!

S: Do you remember if you had to sit with your grade? Or would you be able to sit anywhere you wanted to?

F: Well, I think you could sit anywhere the teacher wanted you to. Between class periods, but for each class instruction you would come up and sit on this bench which was maybe as long as this blackboard. Because there weren't that many pupils in a class.

S: When you talk about lessons and you would come up and sit on the bench, do you remember what subjects you had?

F: We used to have arithmetic and geography and I guess the rest, like English, reading, writing; I guess that's about it.

S: Do you remember what you used to write with, did you have paper of some kind?

F: Oh, sure.

S: Mary had mentioned this really thin, like tissue paper almost, that she called pencil paper.

F: Oh well, I remember that, too. It wasn't really a white paper, it was sort of a scrap paper. But then there was a smoother paper that you used ink on.

S: Now, how did you have ink, was it in...

F: The little steel point and the bottle of ink.

S: Do you remember if there was a hole for the bottle in the desks?

F: Yes, there were.