

Homecoming in the 1940's

Homecoming in the 1940's as told to Patchwork by Clara Gross
Interviewed by Crystal Liang & Sarah Moscatello in the spring of 2003

Mrs. Gross' relationship to the BHS Homecoming celebrations in the 1940's would be that she was in the high school from 1944 to 1946. She also took part in these celebrations during those years. With her active involvement with the BHS homecoming, she can provide a first-hand experience with our topic.

Mrs. Clara E. Gross was born on February 7, 1929, and has lived in Columbia County for about 50 years. She and her husband Joseph have two children, Mildred and Joseph. She is retired.

PATCHWORK: How long have you lived in Columbia County?

GROSS: Since 1937.

PATCHWORK: What was homecoming like back then?

GROSS: We didn't have any.

PATCHWORK: You didn't have like a homecoming dance or parade or anything?

GROSS: A Memorial Day parade we had. I mean you can look in them books and see. There's nothing like they have today.

PATCHWORK: What event took place before homecoming? Did anything happen at all?

GROSS: Well they only had baseball and football, or I mean basketball and football. That's all they had.

PATCHWORK: Did homecoming differ each year? Like was anything different from year to year?

GROSS: No.

PATCHWORK: What was a typical date back then?

GROSS: Nothing really. We used to square dance a lot.

PATCHWORK: Was homecoming a “big deal” then?

GROSS: No.

PATCHWORK: Was there more school spirit back then?

GROSS: No.

PATCHWORK: Did you decorate the school or anything like that?

GROSS: There was no way to get in from out here. My dad worked second shift, and we had no way to get in and out. They did decorate the school, but we didn’t go in because we had no way back and forth.

PATCHWORK: Did you have a homecoming parade, or just a Memorial Day parade?

GROSS: Just like Memorial Day.

PATCHWORK: What kinds of floats were in the parade?

GROSS: Well, like farmers and their tractors, and stuff like that. Old cars.

PATCHWORK: Did they make a big deal about the homecoming royalty, the homecoming court, and the king and queen of homecoming back then?

GROSS: No.

PATCHWORK: Did you have any of that?

GROSS: No.

PATCHWORK: So it changed a lot since then?

GROSS: Oh, a whole lot. Because when you lived in the country at that time, you had no way to go in, and I mean it was all together different. Now, they'd never think that kind of kids going back in there and do anything. Because I mean you were just outsiders. I mean, I'm serious. I mean you had your friends, but they was the ones that came from the country. Because the other ones were ya know, they were sorta, I don't know. They thought they was better than we were because we lived in the country. I mean nobody realizes what the difference is today than what it was then.

PATCHWORK: So the only way in and out was the buses to come pick you up for school?

GROSS: No, I walked from here down to the Buckhorn School.

PATCHWORK: There was a Buckhorn School?

GROSS: Yea, a fellow out here has that there place now. He sells stuff out of, on Schoolhouse Road. That was our schoolhouse. We walked down to there and then we started 7th grade we had to walk down to there and then the bus picked us up. We had no buses, we walked. We had no snow days either. I mean we walked from here down was about 2 and a half miles. And then, I was so short to begin with. My brother had to pull me out of the snowdrifts. But, we made it.

PATCHWORK: So the parade was kind of like how this year when they had all the tractors and stuff?

GROSS: Yeah. That's was it mostly was. Yeah. They brought their animals, ya know. Just like that. They didn't have nice stuff like you guys have. You guys are lucky. I keep telling my grandchildren that, but they just look at me. They can't believe we walked this far.

PATCHWORK: How long would it take to walk down?

GROSS: 'Bout thirty-five minutes. We used to go down and right next to the red Methodist Church. A Mr. Jones lived in there, him and his wife. They never had any children and if it was really cold every morning if she'd be out there, we'd stop and she'd give us hot chocolate.

PATCHWORK: Were the parades big, were there a lot of farmers or were they just like some?

GROSS: No. There was a quite a few of them had their tractors you know, and their old cars like 1937 Fords.

PATCHWORK: Do you know the parade route; do you know where it started and where it ended?

GROSS: Well, they used to start all the time like yous do now, from the hospital on down and then went down to the town park, which it wasn't town park at that time. It was nothing but trees and roots.

PATCHWORK: Did the people in town, did they have dances, or did they go to any dances at the high school?

GROSS: Well, some of them did and they had like Tri-Hi Y it was called, and it was like a boys club, and then they had a girls club. But as far as, when I left here in seventh grade, it was only four of us that went to high school in that year. There was only four of us. And the same four still runs around together.

PATCHWORK: Were your high school classes big?

GROSS: Yeah, they was pretty good sized.

PATCHWORK: Only four of you lived out in the country?

GROSS: That went in when we did. I mean there was a lot of other ones going in years ahead of us. But no, we were the only four from around here that went in, in our class.

PATCHWORK: Was the mayor involved in the parade? Like this year, the governor Mark Schweiker came down to our bicentennial parade.

GROSS: Yeah. They was always there.

PATCHWORK: So the high school was from seventh through twelfth?

GROSS: Yeah, in Bloom.

PATCHWORK: You went to the old high school?

GROSS: Yeah, up on First Street, by the graveyard. That's where we went.

PATCHWORK: Was the graveyard always there?

GROSS: That's been there for years?

PATCHWORK: Were the school colors back then, were they still red and white?

GROSS: I don't think they ever changed the colors. It was always red and white. I don't remember anything except for red and white.

PATCHWORK: Did the cheerleaders and the band people, did they march in the parade like they do now?

GROSS: Yea, but there wasn't near as many as there is right now.

PATCHWORK: Was Central Columbia involved in the parade?

GROSS: No. They used to have a rival with Berwick. 1946 was the first time we beat them. 1946 we beat 'em, and we had a half a day, I'll have you know.

PATCHWORK: Did you have as many school sports as they do now?

GROSS: No. It tells you right in here, basketball, baseball, and football.

PATCHWORK: Were there many school clubs?

GROSS: Yea, they had the Tri-Hi Y and the honor society and stuff like that. There was the Bloomsburg band.

PATCHWORK: Where would you guys go and like practice like team events and stuff?

GROSS: No, you know where the school parks, they have a parking lot there. That's where they used to do it.

PATCHWORK: Was there grass back then there or was it still concrete?

GROSS: No, it was just like dirt.

PATCHWORK: Is that where the football team would play?

GROSS: No, they were down just a little bit farther down then what you are right now.

PATCHWORK: Did they walk to their field to play football everyday?

GROSS: Yea, that's the only way they had to go.

PATCHWORK: Was the university involved in the homecoming parade?

GROSS: Yea, but there wasn't nothing compared to what we got today, nothing.

PATCHWORK: How long would the parades usually last?

GROSS: When we had them, maybe an hour if you were lucky. Yea, they didn't have too much.

PATCHWORK: Were local businesses sponsoring the parade?

GROSS: Yea. Just like some of them there and there sponsored different things.

PATCHWORK: Were these senior popularity polls, were they popular back then?

GROSS: Yea.

PATCHWORK: What was the Tri-Hi Y, like what would they do?

GROSS: I have no idea. We didn't go to any of them. We couldn't get in there. Once we were out of school, you got on the bus and you left. There was no waiting, cause if you, did you walked.

PATCHWORK: How long was a school day?

GROSS: Just about the same as it is now.

PATCHWORK: They had yearbooks?

GROSS: Oh yea, they had yearbooks.

PATCHWORK: Were the yearbooks really expensive back then?

GROSS: Well, for the amount of money that you make, yea. My dad only for ten dollars a week, and there was nine kids. Yea, he worked for Harry Magee, up on the farm.

PATCHWORK: When you were in high school, did most people have homework then?

GROSS: Oh yea. Not as much as you guys have at night. I don't understand, even to this day, how some of these people can afford to buy all that stuff that those kids have to do. I mean some of them today, these people aren't making all that much money. You know, just like when we went in school. You could tell who had the money. They had new shoes every so many a-things. We got a new pair at Christmas time and at Easter.

PATCHWORK: So how many people do you think would buy the yearbooks?

GROSS: Oh, I have no idea. In town there was a lot of people that made better money.