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## Thanksgiving, Pie Suppers, and Romance

Mary Stover Redmond

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Thanksgiving,

Pie

Suppers,

and

Romance

—By Mary Stover Redmond

Just recently, I noted an item in the newspaper that gave me a good case of Thanksgiving nostalgia—and, strangely enough, the item wasn't even about the holiday season. It was about an upcoming Grady County box supper.

In the 1920's growing up in the Four-Mile Strip, I attended many a box supper—except that, in those days, they were usually called pie suppers. I also know that they will be forever associated with the Thanksgiving season for me because most of our suppers were held around November. We were looking forward to Christmas, you see, and therefore raising the necessary funds that it would take to turn the old Stover School into the brightly decorated center of our farm community's yuletide celebration.

Now, throughout most of the decade, I wasn't old enough to have a beau, but it was great fun for me to observe the young adults and to realize how much wooing and courting could go on under the guise of a plain old pie supper. In fact, I picked up, during those years, most of the tricks that would quickly come in handy when I got to the age for romantic entanglement.

The girls took the initiative; they would bring pies in all sorts of decorated boxes and containers with fancy flourishes and ruffles. In the 1920's, trimmings were bound to be crepe paper, but much could be done to make that crepe paper

especially attractive, such as pulling the edges to make them fluted.

Yes, and I remember those pie containers in a myriad of designs, of all sizes and shapes: some very big; some square and others round, all of them brightly colored. I think the fanciest one I ever saw had been fixed in the shape of a covered wagon, complete with wheels. On the side of the box, the budding artist had written "Stover School or Bust!"

In the twenties, we were still very much aware of our pioneer heritage. Perhaps that's why the Thanksgiving season was filled with so many shared, community-oriented events.

The young ladies would place their various offerings on long tables in Stover School's "manual training" room, a name which can be remembered today with affectionate irony, I suppose. The boys, anxious for some romantic manual training, would bid on the pies at auction, just as they do today.

They'd have to hope that they were bidding on a dish prepared by their preferred girlfriends since the names on the boxes were kept secret during the auction. But that didn't deter the bidding: illegal information on which girl had baked which pie was fairly easy to get, and the source was usually the girl herself!

The Stover School boys sometimes had to guard against poaching, too: fellows from out of the community would invade the proceedings, equally intent on some pie-supper spooning. And that's when the price of a dessert could really escalate! One of my friends brought the bid up to \$8 one night, just to make sure he'd be dining with her. Eight dollars is a costly dessert—even now!

But the objective, of course, was the pairing off. Once the boys had bid upon and bought the pies and had discovered the names of the makers, everybody paired off for food and for some rather hesitant courtship. Most of the boys usually found that they had guessed correctly in their bidding, and those who hadn't often got the pleasant surprise of getting to know someone even nicer.

Thanksgiving was in the air; Christmas was coming; and the members of the next generation of the Four-Mile Strip were getting to know one another through the ritual of a pie supper.

Did those innocent courtships blossom into marriage? Very often they did; but on those nights, nobody was really making plans so far in advance. Instead they were celebrating the experience of being young, and at least for that evening, perhaps in love, in the unlikely setting of a country schoolhouse right in the middle of the Four-Mile Strip.

(MARY STOVER REDMOND of Duncan, a free-lance writer, was reared on the family farm located four miles south of Rush Springs in Grady County. She is author of a book titled *ADVENTURES IN THE FOUR-MILE STRIP: AN OKLAHOMA CHILDHOOD*.) \*

