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Letter

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Letter

By Sara Nee Ball

Dear Dr. Thomas:

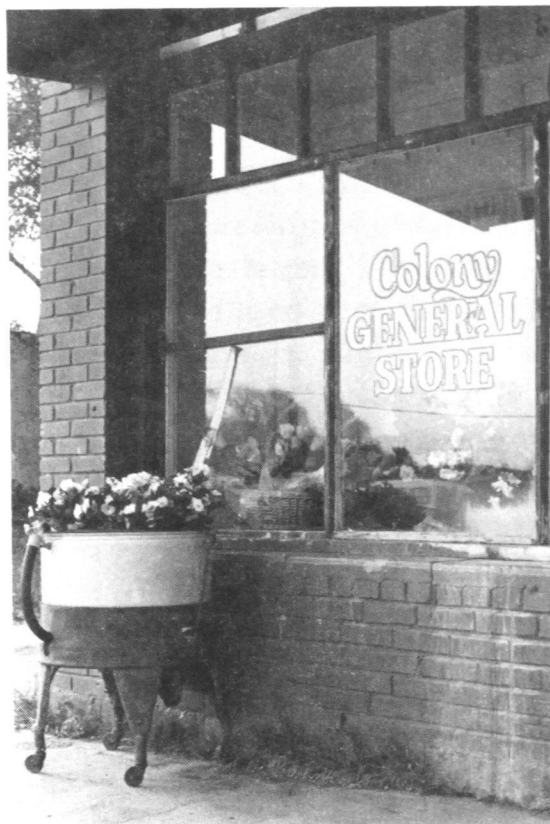
I always enjoy *WESTVIEW*, although sometimes I do not find time to read it thoroughly. I keep all the issues; today I had a few minutes and picked up the Summer 1986 copy and for the first time noticed the "Foreword" in which you mentioned Colony. It brought back a flood of happy memories, and I decided to write quickly some of those memories as I have never even told my children very much about my time there. I am 82 now with a wonderful large family and am now writing a book on the history of Yukon's one hundred years. If I don't jot this down right now, I never will.

I moved to that tiny, dusty little village on a sweltering August day in 1917. I had just gone to live with my Uncle Ord Cutright and his wife; my parents had recently died. Uncle Ord bought the mercantile store in Colony, and at first we lived in a little storeroom of the store. It was a smothering experience. But my memories of Colony are mostly very happy ones. People were friendly, and my girlhood playmates were wonderful friends. I think of my Colony days as the most carefree of my childhood after my parents died. Earlier I had sad experiences while living with an aunt.

The little town had few business buildings. Across the road south of my uncle's store was a farm; on the east was the Seger Indian School. Across the alley west were a barbershop and drugstore. North of those were some other buildings and residences. Diagonally was the bank operated by the Ebys. They lived in a large house near it, and, I assume, oversaw the farm it was on. We soon moved into part of the empty adjoining building to the east. It was there that all the family except me had the influenza which swept over the United States during World War I. Then

we moved to the empty motel to the north. Perhaps during the days of the traveling salesman it was busy; but during the year we lived in it, there was only one paying guest. In the spring of 1919, my cousin Otis was diagnosed by the young doctor at the Indian school as having spinal meningitis. We were quarantined for a month, which certainly evokes very unhappy memories. Otis was so ill, and there were nothing to read—no books, no newspapers—not even school books. If there had been a Bible, I likely would have memorized it.

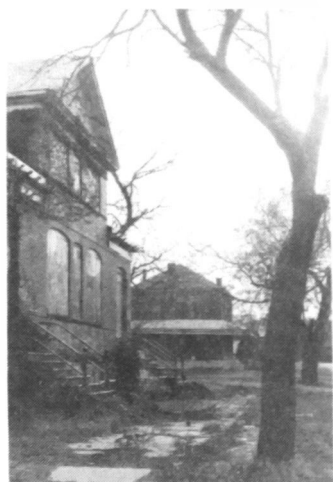
Otis died, and his parents took him to Bridgeport for burial. They were gone for two weeks and during that time my brother Roy developed mastoid trouble and became seriously ill. The Brinks were taking care of us, and Mrs. Brink tenderly nursed Roy. The three Brink children were Mary, Pete, and Alma. Uncle was so heartbroken over Otis' death that he sold the store and moved us to Yukon, where I have lived ever since.



Colony General Store today. Photos by Lisa Bradford

During our time in Colony, a kindly old man brought the mail from Weatherford to Colony and also took passengers in his beaten-up, old, open-topped Ford. The two summers I was in Colony, Uncle sent me by the mailman to the railroad to go visit my sister and little brother, who lived in Yukon with our grandparents. That was a big adventure, and it was quite safe during those days for little girls to go almost anywhere.

I adored a lovely caring teacher in Colony, Mrs. Leticia Webb. She was so sweet and helpful to a homely little orphan. My chums were Elsie Hasbrook, who lived with her sister—a daughter-in-law of Mr. Seger's. I had no idea at that time of what an important historical



Colony Indian School

person he was. Now I think how great it would have been if I had talked with him about his experiences. Of course at that time there were a great many Indians all around Colony who had come with Seger when he brought his "colony" there.

The older ones still rarely spoke English and wore blankets and braids; I was always very much impressed by the all-night wailings when there was a death. When Uncle bought the store, an employee who could speak the Arapaho language stayed on. When the employee moved to a larger town, Uncle had a terrible time trying to do business in sign language. It was wartime, and there were all sorts of shortages—especially flour and white sugar. It seemed that the Indians got more ration stamps for those

two items than others. They seemed to outsmart Uncle and got his supplies.

Other girlfriends were Iris Humbarger and the Holly girls- Laura and Tilly. The Hollys were a large, happy German family. The mother and older sisters were always baking goodies and all kinds of goodies

which they shared with us; we were also welcome at their house at all times.

Every other Saturday night, the town children could go to the movies at the Indian school, and we would all happily run down there together. I doubt if



The Old School Steps

there were ever over twenty-five children altogether. The school was situated in a beautiful area surrounded by a park which had many big trees in it; there was even a deer. The clear little stream east of Colony ran across the east side of the campus of the boarding school. The boys were taught farm work, dairy, etc.; the girls learned to do laundry, cook, and sew—in addition to their studies. I hope to go back to Colony one of these days to see the museum set up by our Justice lady. *

(SARA NEE ALLEN BALL is a resident of Yukon. This letter is her first WESTVIEW publication.)