

Students create book on historic school

Cynthia Beaudette

of the Muscatine Journal

MUSCATINE, Iowa — In the late 1800s and early 1900s, children in Muscatine County didn't have to wait for summer to get a break from school.

School was out for three to four weeks in late autumn so children could stay home and help their parents with farm work.

That is one fact a team of 10 fifth-grade artists and writers at Muscatine's McKinley Elementary uncovered last school year as they researched their local history book, "One-Room School ABC Book."

And visitors to Wildcat Den State Park in Muscatine County can read all about it when they visit the historic Melpine one-room schoolhouse and Pine Creek Grist mill which are located there.

The "One-Room School ABC Book," was developed last year by McKinley students Jeremy DeVore, Megan Honts, Taylor Bishop, Rachel Beatty, Chelsea McGill, Katie Shoultz, Carli Fix, Kaylea Rusch, Noah Weikert and Austin Moss as a community service project after the students identified the need for educational materials at the Melpine School Museum. The book is now displayed at the school.

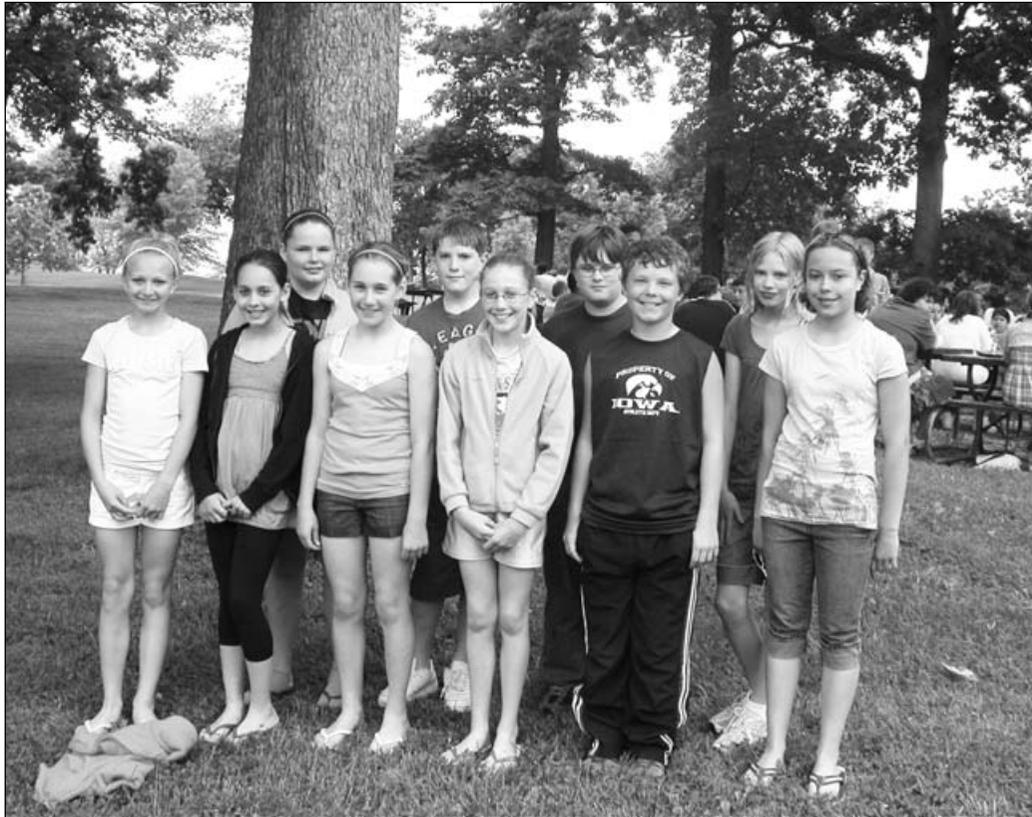
McKinley art teacher Lisa Kurtz, fifth grade teacher Jami Schroeder and teacher librarian JoAnn Sunderman assisted the students as they continued their research and created text and illustrations for the book.

It recalls the school days of their great-grandparents.

The book contains a sequence of ABC illustrations and text such as: "D is for desks. Wooden desks or benches were in different sizes for the grades. Desks sometimes had a hole to hold a jar of ink."

Fun facts are laced throughout the pages, such as one-room schools had separate entrances for boys and girls, and girls often wore dresses

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CYNTHIA BEAUDETTE/MUSCATINE JOURNAL

These West Middle School sixth-graders created the award-winning “One-Room School ABC Book,” when they were McKinley Elementary School students last year. They are, front row, left to right: Katie Shultz, Taylor Bishop, Kaylea Rusch, Rachel Beatty, Austin Moss and Megan Honts. **Second row:** Carli Fix, Noah Weikert, Jeremy DeVore and Chelsea McGill.

Book

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made from feed sacks.

Other highlights are simple recipes for canned dill pickles and strawberry jam.

(According to the book, jam with soda crackers was a favorite after-school snack in the one-room schoolhouse days.)

Thursday morning, the book’s 10 authors and artists, now sixth-graders at West Middle School, enjoyed an end-of-the-year picnic at Muscatine’s Weed Park as they talked about the project.

Shultz learned that the female teachers who taught in the one-room schoolhouses weren’t paid as well as men.

And Moss noted that the women teachers couldn’t be married.

“It was harsh,” said Rusch.

The students were also surprised at lives of the students.

“They had to walk almost three miles to school,” said Shultz.

The students gathered facts for the project by interviewing former one-room school students who live at Bickford Cottage in Muscatine.

They also used information

Details

Visit these historic sites in the lower area of Wildcat Den State Park

Pine Creek Grist Mill built in 1848

Days: Throughout May

Hours: 12:30-4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Days: Sunday, June 1-Sunday, Sept. 14

Hours: 12:30-4:30 p.m.

Wednesday-Sunday

Days: Saturdays and Sundays from Sept. 20-Oct. 12

Hours: 12:30-4:30 p.m.

Melpine School, built in 1877

Days: Sundays from June 1-Sept. 28

Hours: 1-4 p.m.

from “One Room Wonders: Iowa’s Country Schools” by Jon E. Heitland and the Iowa State Education Association book, “Iowa Country Schools: Landmarks of Learning,” edited by William Sherman.

Sunderman invited Sherman to write a forward for the book.

“When I received a copy of this booklet I was impressed by the content and the quality of the student artwork,” said Sherman. “I felt it would be a wonderful resource for persons interested in Iowa country schools.”

Sherman, a member of the Country School Association of America, included information about the book in a confer-

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2008 events

Event: 5K Trail Run/Walk

When: Sept. 6, 8 a.m.

Event: Heritage Day

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 20

Event: Buckskinners Rendezvous

When: Friday-Sunday, Sept. 19, 20 and 21

For more information contact:

Tom Hanifan 563-263-4818 or

Wildcat Den 563-263-4337

Online: <http://www.pinecreekgrist-mill.com/>

ence flyer for a statewide meeting for that organization this October.

And the Country School Association plans to use the booklet at the annual conference of the Country School Association of America in June at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

And Sherman isn’t the only one who’s impressed.

The students received first place in the junior division of the Iowa Future Problem Solving Program and a second-place trophy in the education category at the international conference in 2007.

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