

## “Interesting or Unique Part of School District History”

By: Kelly Spencer

On September fifth, 1917, the Pamlico County School District introduced North Carolina's first motorized school bus. Before this time the students were transported by a horse drawn wagon. Now, we travel in school busses that have many advantages.

Before motorized vehicles, people would ride in horse drawn wagons. The wagons were being used to carry children to school. The wagon was very slow and was introduced by George Shillibeer in 1827. It could carry around twenty-five passengers. Sometimes wagons were called “kid hack's” or “school hack's”. it was also very normal that kids would ride to school in a farm wagon to go to school.

Then came the first motorized school bus in 1917. This was brought into the Pamlico County schools district because the school board wanted a better way of transportation for students. The state wouldn't pay for the kids to go to school until 1911 when they made transportation a public expense. The bus cost \$1,379 and was bought from the Corbitt Company of Henderson. Some busses were used to transport kids in the Oriental area. The motorized busses allowed the one-room schools to become modern school houses. The first school bus driver was Annie Harris who lived in Kershaw. She also taught at Oriental. At this time students would only go to school for eleven years and each year consisted of eight months. The reason school years were only eight months at a time was because children had to help farming and had to do other jobs. Lots of grades were combined because of the small number.

The school superintendent drove the bus to Raleigh to publicize their new purchase. This act was followed by many others in rural states. My Great-Grandmother, Emma Edmundson, remembers riding the bus in Oriental. Although the new school bus was a faster way to travel, it also had a major disadvantage because all the roads were dirt back then and the bus would get stuck whenever it rained.

I interviewed my Grandmother, Mattie Spencer, and she remembers riding one of two busses that Pamlico County had around the mid 1930's in Oriental. My maternal Grandfather, Grandmother, Great Aunt, Aunt and my mother all drove busses for Pamlico County Schools. This has been a very long tradition in my family.

Now, we have modern busses that are closed in, have air condition and are faster. Now school busses are much more advanced and the bus drivers are too. We have security cameras and emergency kits on every bus. We also have emergency exits for accidents.

I am very thankful that transportation has come as far as it has and is as advanced as it is. Without school busses many kids would not be able to get to school. Looking back at the horse drawn wagon, the first motorized bus and today's transportation to school, I now see how things evolve all around us and we hardly notice it.