

## **Narration of Maggie Gorham Dodson**

Good evening. My name is Maggie Olivia Gorham Dodson. As you can see from my headstone, I was born July 18, 1875, and died May 19, 1959. My parents were Alvin Martin Gorham and Emma T. Copeland. I was born in Georgia, but by the time I was five years old, we had moved to Blount County, Alabama. I married George Washington Dodson on Jan. 26, 1890, at Holly Pond by Justice of the Peace, Eddie Hart. We had twelve children and many of their descendants still live in this area. It was exciting living in Holly Pond in the early days. My brother-in-law, J. B. Dodson, was the first Postmaster in 1888 when the town officially got its name. My husband and his brother J. B. both signed the incorporation papers for the town. My family and George's family helped establish the town.

George's father, William Jasper Dodson, came to this area around 1882. He had lived in Lineville, Alabama, when the Civil War broke out. He served in the Confederate States Army and after the war, moved his family to Rockdale County, Georgia. I was told that he knew Dr. Watts when they live in Lineville, Alabama, and that Dr. Watts asked him to come to the new Holly Pond community to teach school. He moved his family here and entered land under the Homestead Act. I can't say for sure, but the family says that they stayed with the Noel Estes Family of the Redan Community when they arrived. Then they lived across the road from Newman Alldredge, next door to Dr. George Watts. Their house was right down there (point to land across from Keeton house). He taught school here at Holly Pond and also at Pine Grove and Center Point.

Back then, school was not like it is today. Every community had to come up with its own school, find teachers, and pay them. Holly Pond selected trustees to make sure the building was maintained and teachers were hired. The community did all kind of things to raise money for the school. They had plays and programs. They had box suppers and cake walks. When a building was needed, someone would donate the timber. The men would cut and haul the trees, cut into lumber, and work together to construct the building. The women would prepare lunches for the workers.

Most every parent wanted an education for the children, but most people in this area farmed. When kids got big enough to help out on the farm, they were needed to help get the crop planted, work it, and then harvest it. The school had to schedule classes between times. If the school got a few months of classes in, they were fortunate. Students needed a

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basic education and parents wanted their children to have a better life and believed that education was the key. In the beginning, all the students were taught together in one room with one teacher. Supplies were not readily available, but they used what they had.

We tried to teach our children to behave and become responsible. All the kids had their chores to do. We knew everybody in the neighborhood and if somebody else's kids were at my house, I corrected them like my own. I expected them to do the same. We told our kids they better act right in school. If they didn't do their school work, they would be in trouble. And if they got a whipping in school, they would get another one at home!

The first school at Holly Pond was a log one-room building over near where Chamber's Florist is now located. The community grew and soon this building was overcrowded. A new building was built across the road from the Baptist church near where Lick Creek Road joins Highway 278. This building was a large four-room, two-story building. By the time the town was incorporated in 1912, a third school had been constructed. It was the pride of the community: a mammoth red ornate two-story building with four rooms downstairs and three upstairs. Two of the upstairs rooms could be connected to form one large room for assembly programs and community meetings.

Schools and churches were the main gathering places for social event in the community. Parents and other relatives came to school to see the students perform plays, recitations, spelling bees, musicals, and other events. Sports were also a big draw for schools. Many would come out to cheer the home team on in baseball, basketball, and later, football. Up until 1927, the school only has classes to the tenth grade. If anyone wanted to go on to school, they had to go to Cullman or Blountsville to complete high school. But in 1927 construction was begun on a one-story brick building that was to house the first class of graduating seniors. The school was accredited by the State in 1928.

By the time our children came along, the school was well established in the community. Other teachers came and took up the torch of educating the children of Holly Pond because education was and still is important to the citizens of Holly Pond. My father-in-law, William Jasper Dodson, died in 1898 and is buried in New Hope Cemetery just up the road from here. He didn't live to see all the changes and the growth of Holly Pond School he helped start. But many of his descendants, and mine, have carried on the legacy he left as an educator right here at Holly Pond.

Thanks for coming by. I enjoyed talking with you. Come back when you can!