

# Reminiscences of My Boyhood in

## The bannisters at the old school

# Roslyn

By Roy W. Moger

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*(The following story is part of a collection of short stories written by Mr. Moger, who serves as a member of the Village of Roslyn Board of Trustees and as Roslyn Village historian.)*

I often wonder how many of us who went to the Roslyn School in the first quarter of this century remember the outdoor stairway that led from the ground level of the school house which stood on School St. (now Old Northern Blvd.) to the playground area which was above and behind the school. The school house of School District No. 3 stood somewhat above the street level and was located just south of the present fire house of the Roslyn Rescue Hook and Ladder Co.

The stairway to the school yard was quite wide, with a bannister on either side, so that no one could fall off, and, what was even more important to the children who attended school there, a bannister in the middle of the stairway. These stairs were built with several flights of stairs separated by a landing. The landing at the top of the third flight was larger than the others and was covered by a roof so that it formed a sort of summer house with a railing and a seat built around the sides.

The roof had a rather low pitch so that it was easy for the boys to climb on. Above the summer house were more flights of stairs and landings, at least three, with the top landing being on a level with the school yard where the children had a place to run and play in an area much larger than the grounds around the school.

On the north and east and south side of the school property, there was a high board fence. It was made with wide boards placed vertically, close together with the fence frame on the outside. It was very difficult for even a high school boy to climb it from the inside. Fortunately for me, the side bannister of the top landing just touched this high-board fence.

By the time I was in third grade,

I could stand on the bannister of the top landing, reach up and take hold of the top of the fence and climb over and down the other side. I could then cross Andrew's cow pasture, climb the rail fence on the other side, follow the path into the woods, and climb the hill through the woods to my house. As it was easy enough to climb the school yard fence from outside into the school yard, when I was older I could start for school when the school bell started ringing and be in my classroom by the time it stopped. I do believe I had an advantage in this. Joe O'Reilly, a classmate of mine, rang the school bell when I was in high school. The school bell hung in a bell tower atop the school house. The bell rope was in a closet on the second floor next to what had been the principal's office. Joe would continue to ring the bell until I came running up the stairs and dashed into my classroom.

The stairs to the upper school-yard playground provided a wonderful place to play. The girls had full possession of the summer house and the boys full possession of the summer house roof, which was attainable by climbing several trees that grew close to the roof and whose limbs extended over it. Agile boys could thus get from the stairs to the roof with little or no trouble.

The best part of all I have left to the last. It was the center bannister. I don't know what kind of wood it was made of, but it was very smooth and highly polished. Not by any oil or wax, but by the constant daily rubbing from the pants of the boys, and the dresses of the girls in the spring, summer and fall, and by their coats in the winter. No furniture of the finest quality ever had so smooth a surface, or so high a polish.

The younger children yearned desperately for the day when they would be tall enough to sit on the center bannister and slide down from one landing to the next from top to bottom and then run up the stairs again for another slide. I know, for I attended this school from 1914 to 1925 and rode the bannisters as soon as I was big enough to do so. I rode them the year round, being proud of the fact

that my short cut to the village from home was through the school yard so that I had more opportunity to slide than the others.

I really didn't have the bannisters to myself very often, for there were usually children playing there after school all the year round.

Today, we would say the stairs were a very dangerous place for children to play. No school would allow such a pastime to take place, even if supervised. As for supervision, during the 12 years that I attended school there, I never remember any adult being on the stairs except when we had

gym class on the upper playground. Then, the whole class and the gym teacher used the stairs to get to the upper level.

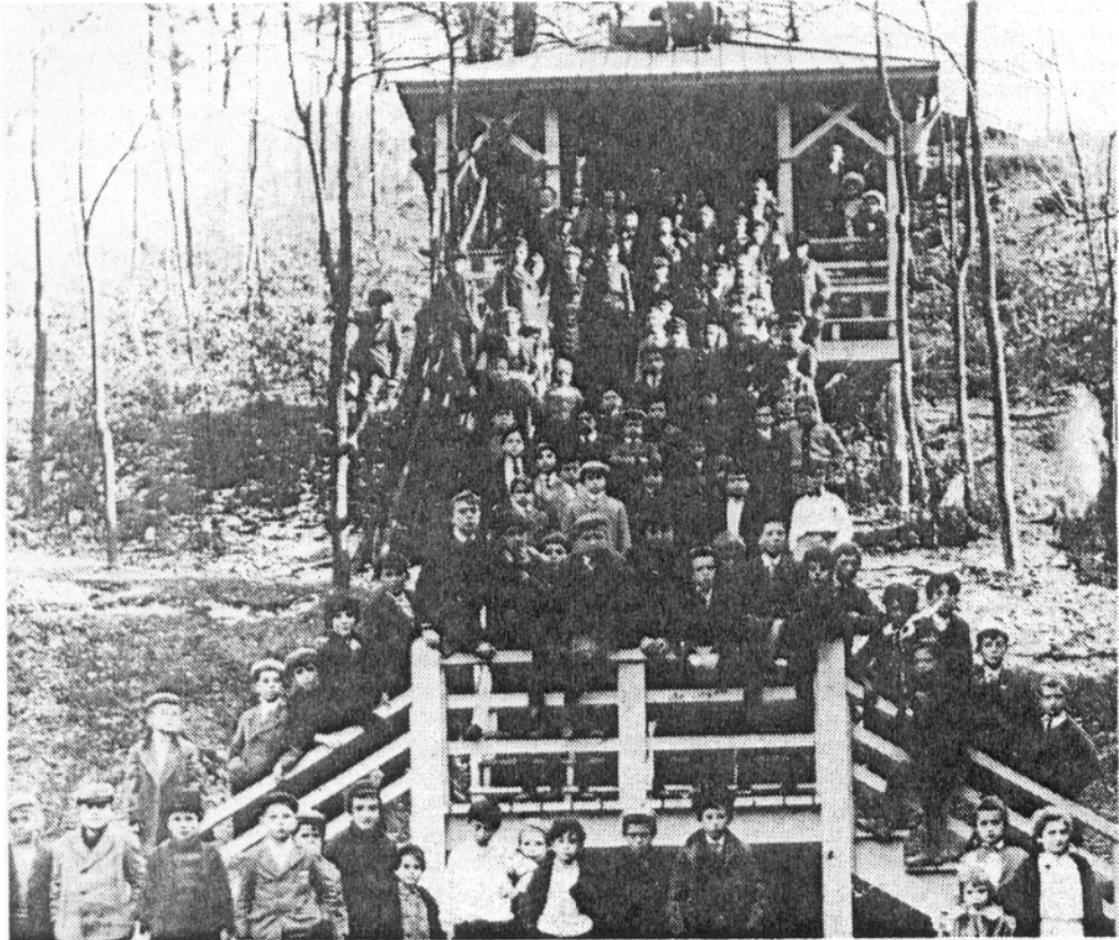
We probably got more exercise getting to the playground than we got after we arrived, for our usual practice was to race up the stairs.

I have no recollection of anyone ever getting hurt except myself. When I was in fifth grade, I got a splinter in my bottom one noontime. I had thoughtlessly used a side bannister instead of the center one.

The splinter hurt quite a bit, so I spoke to the teacher and was sent to the principal's office. Mr. Mul-

ter, the principal, gave me a note and sent me to Dr. Jessup's office on the second floor of the bank building (the first Roslyn Savings Bank building which stood on the site of the present bank). Dr. Jessup put me on my stomach on a table in his office and cut the splinter out. He put some iodine on the appropriate place, covered it with a piece of gauze and adhesive tape and sent me back to school within half an hour.

I'm sure that if anyone else had gotten seriously hurt during the years that I was in school I would have known about it. (over)



**STAIRWAY TO UPPER PLAYGROUND** behind the Roslyn School on School St., now Old Northern Blvd. The picture was taken around 1900. *4-10-80*