

Haser-Sourek Memorial Trees at Bath School

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Trees A Memorial To 3 Who Died In 1930

By WILMA KOLLERT

BATH — "School Blast Fatal to One Boy" was the front page headline in the paper 40 years ago this month.

The story told how five basketball players were seriously burned in an explosion at Bath School. One youth died. Four others today still carry

the scars of that day's event.

As if that was not enough sorrow for the school, two more pupils died in a home fire after the holidays.

In the Spring of 1931 three spruce trees were planted in memory of the three youths who died during the school year.

THOSE TREES today tower over the southeast corner of the school yard along Cleveland-Massillon rd., just outside the fenced-in playground.

In 1830 the school at 1246 N. Cleveland-Massillon rd. served all pupils in Bath School District. Later the building became an elementary school in

the consolidated Bath-Richfield District renamed Kever.

Roy M. Pugh, then superintendent of the school, remembers that fateful day of the school fire in December 1930. The school buses had loaded and left the building for the day. Some girls were in the gym playing basketball so the

boys had to wait their turn.

PUGH WAS with some of the boys in the music room singing favorite songs. Other boys went elsewhere to do something different.

Five boys went into the furnace room beneath the gym. It was there that a lighted

match was thrown into the coal bin. Coal dust exploded and black smoke filled the first floor level.

The boys in the music room raised the first windows and got out before becoming overcome by smoke.

Pugh groped his way through the smoke and found

two boys. Three others had gotten out and were spotted by a girl's physical education teacher who took them to the hospital.

RECALLING the day, Pugh said, "It seemed like forever until the ambulance came. The two boys were so badly burned that they could not stand any covering."

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That night William Haser, then 16, died from the burns. Classmates Jack McCausland, Howard McKisson, Kenneth Powers and Charles Codding had a painful recovery.

Codding, then 17, was the most seriously burned of the four survivors. During his long stay in the hospital, Pugh was a frequent visitor.

During this time the youth gave his superintendent a dollar bill with the inscription: "Charles Codding and this bill went through the fire and explosion at Bath School Dec. 1, 1930."

To this day Pugh carries it in a special folder in his bill-fold.

CODDING NOW lives in Florida. The others still reside in Bath. Pugh, now retired from schoolwork, lives at 1990 Cleveland-Massillon rd.

The evergreens at the school honor William Haser and a brother and sister who died in a home fire. Betty Sourek, 17, and her brother, Joey, 6, perished in the blaze.

Their father shortly afterwards died of burns. Sourek rd. in southern Bath Twp. bears the family name.

IN THE SPRING of 1931 at a school assembly the Haser family was given William's football letter. The parents gave it to the school where it hung in the library. After the consolidation with Richfield School, the letter was put in storage in the basement with other school mementos.

When Bath Twp. was preparing for its 150th birthday in 1968 the search was on for items of the olden days. Pugh found the school memorial, which was displayed at the Sesquicentennial.



CHILDREN AT BATH SCHOOL play near three tall evergreens which are memorials to pupils who died from fires nearly four decades ago. Roy Pugh, one-time superin-

tendent of the school, holds a football letter awarded posthumously to one of the victims, William Haser.