

A Detailed History of  
Pleasant Valley School

District #58  
Creek County, Oklahoma

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*William Firey*  
*Ray Firey*  
*Jerry Herrington*  
*Evelyn Douglas*

This entire 5 page article (including this cover page) may be accessed, downloaded and printed as a PDF file entitled:

***"Detailed History of Pleasant Valley School-Creek County, Oklahoma"***

on the website **www.fireytrails.com**. (Click on the "Rock Creek Community-Highlights of History" Button on the left side of the page.) Look for the link above. To access the history page directly, go to <http://www.fireytrails.com/History.htm>

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# Pleasant Valley School

Rock Creek Community

Creek County, Oklahoma

*(This Article Researched & Written May 13 thru May 18, 2009)*

*By Diana Firey*

Pleasant Valley School was a one room school house (grades 1-8) built some time after the turn of the century in the early 1900's. Among the many rural kids that attended there were the children of Joseph William and Eva (Haney) Firey; Laliah (born 1919), (1) John Kenneth (born 1921), and Kathern (born 1923). *(On the next page is a photo (2) of the three oldest Fireys and their classmates standing in front of the original school house in about 1929.)* The younger children, J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. (born 1925) and Betty (born 1928) also attended the school through the eighth grade.

Taking 209 south around the hill from the old Firey home place location (now 5846 S. 209, then Route 1) , the distance to the school is 1.7 miles. (3) However, 209 didn't exist in the early years and the kids would walk as the crow flies over the hill to the school. (The 209 road extension from Coyote Trail to what is called 71st today was built in 1941 and 1942 when Curtis Greer was Tulsa County commissioner.)

On top of the hill on the way to the school was a good size prairie and J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. remembers seeing herds of wild mustangs (40-50 in number) and also remembers walking past what the old timers would call an old "buffalo wallow" on top of the hill. He said when buffalo were plentiful in earlier years in this area, they would wallow in the mud in a particular spot to cover their hide to protect against flies. This wallowing eventually made a good size smooth crater in the ground. In years since, the one time prairie has been covered by timber. J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. also happens to remember the neighbors who lived across the road from the school house for many years, Charley and Pearl Livingston.

(4) The original school house burned down about 1935 but was rebuilt on the same location about a year later. (5) Clay tile covered with stucco was used for the walls at that time. (6) As a school house, Pleasant Valley never had modern plumbing. There were two outhouses—one for the boys and one for the girls. The school house was heated with a pot bellied coal burning stove and had a special house near the school where the coal was stored.. The school teacher lived in a little house located behind the school. (7) In the mid to late 40's a new metal roof was contracted through J.W. "Bill" Firey Jr. who was helped by John Kenneth Firey, Herbert McCarty and Charlie Edwards. (According to J.W. "Bill" Firey Jr., Charlie Edwards was on the school board and was instrumental in getting Bill the contract.) J.W. "Bill" Firey also said that his sole purpose in hiring Herbert McCarty was to get him to sit on the peak of the roof holding the ends of J.W. and Charley's legs to keep them from sliding off the slick metal as they worked putting on the roof. (8) 1951-52 was the final school year that class was in session. William Frank "Bill" Firey (born 1942) and his three cousins (9) (Joe, Russell and Denny Wayne Cockburn) were the only students of the school when it was closed and consolidated with Keystone by the fall of 1952.

(10) The school house property was purchased by O. L. and Evelyn Douglas just after the school house closed in 1952. According to Evelyn Douglas, they bought the schoolhouse and 80 acres - 40 on the north side of the road and 40 on the south. The Douglases did not move in until 1955 and converted the building into a modern house. They divided the schoolhouse into rooms, added plumbing and reworked the windows, among other improvements. They also added a room addition and a concrete block garage on the east side. They left the original stucco clay tile walls on the outside of the schoolhouse with the metal roof overhead. Over time, they divided and sold the schoolhouse acreage moving away in the early 70's. (11) Jerry and Charlene Herrington purchased the school house in 1978 from Charlie Lott. Charlene had attended Pleasant Valley as Charlene Miller (Herman Miller's daughter and lived on what is now the (12) Norman Kirkland place) and walked to school with William Firey (son of John Kenneth Firey). Charlene passed away suddenly in 2008 but always told her husband, Jerry, that William would always run off ahead on his way to the school house. Jerry & Charlene rocked the outside of the house and garage while they owned it. He also re-roofed the hip style metal roof, putting on traditional asphalt shingles. The Herringtons lived at the Pleasant Valley location until 1984. The school house has not changed much since that time. It is now the O'Dell Residence.

The modern address of Pleasant Valley School is:

**21625 W. 71st Street (Sand Springs, OK 74063).**



*Laliah (back row 4th from left with short hair cut) , Kathern (4th from Right in front row), John Kenneth (front row on right). Photo taken in approx. 1929. (13) Mrs. Lillian Ruth Daniel is the teacher in middle. Doors pictured are in the middle on the east side. Building in picture is the first school house that burned down in 1935.*

**These Photos Contributed By O.L. & Evelyn Douglas - July, 2009**



*Original Pleasant Valley School Merry Go Round southwest corner of schoolhouse. Pictured are the children of O.L. and Evelyn Douglas-Chris, Michael, and Karen.*



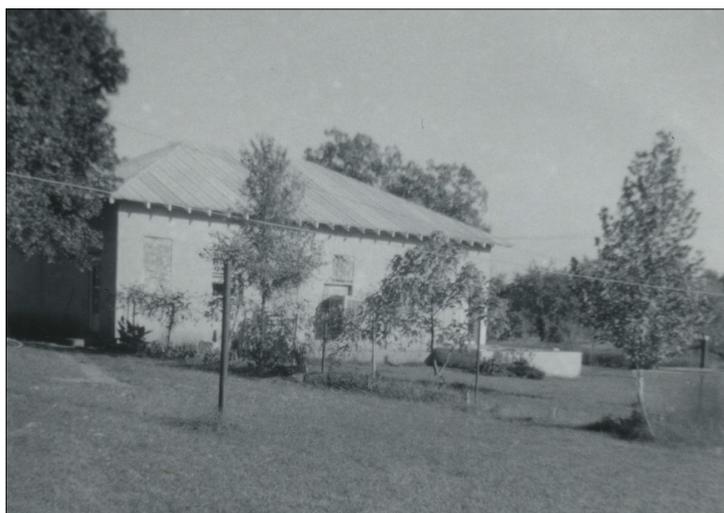
*The family dog, Lady, on south side of house.*



*Garage being added on east side of house.*



*Southwest corner of house.*



*West side of House*



*Room Addition on East side of house*

# Pleasant Valley - Then and Now

Pleasant Valley from similar vantage points around 50 years apart. Photo on left taken in the 1950's versus the one on right taken May of 2009. Look and compare the photo of the double-trunk post oak tree on the southeast corner.



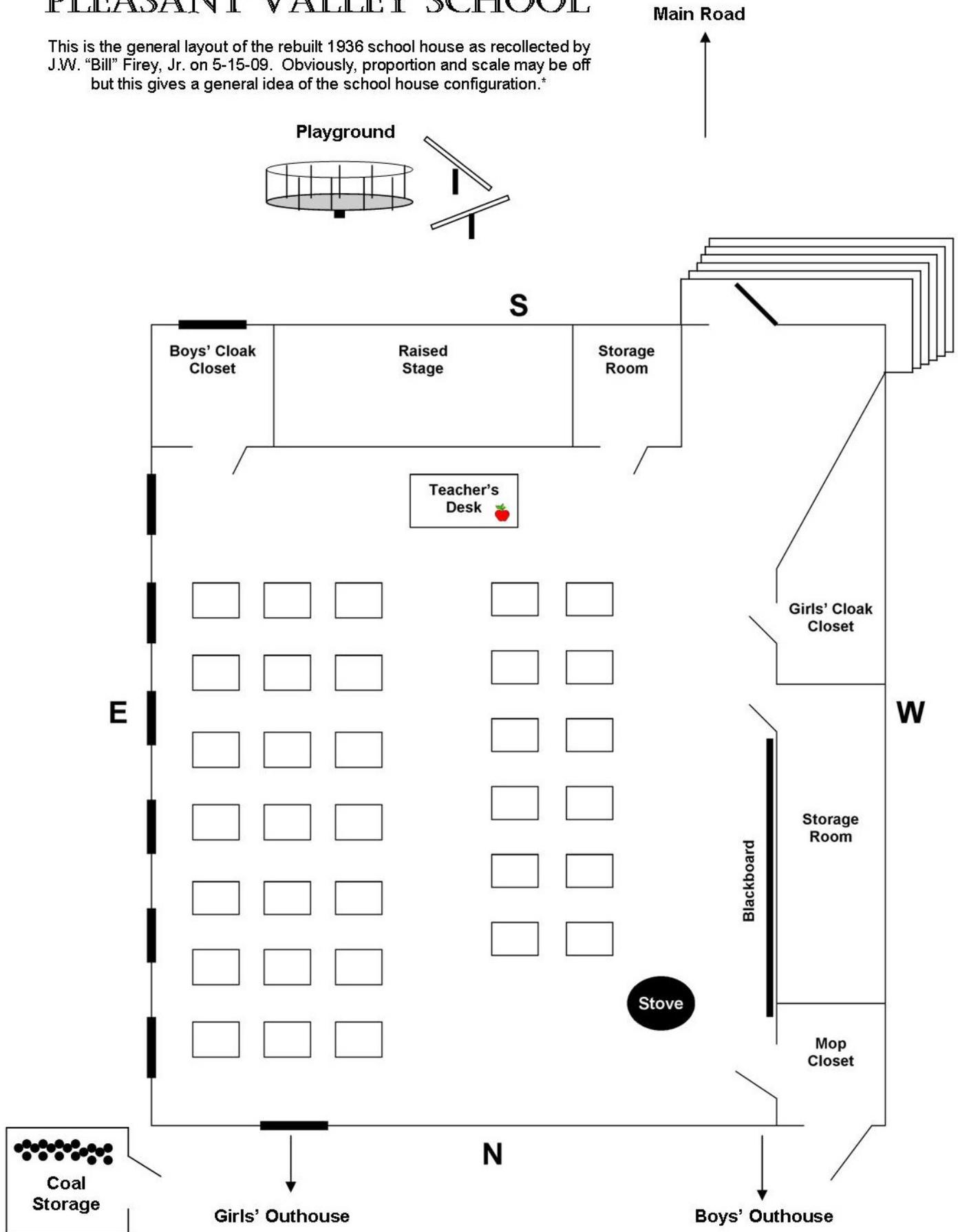
Now the O'Dell residence, Pleasant Valley is located at **21625 W. 71st Street (Sand Springs, OK 74063).**

## REFERENCE LIST

1. According to a 5-12-09 email correspondence by William Frank Firey, when John Kenneth was promoted on to Keystone (9th-12th grade- graduating in 1938), he would have to ride his horse more than a mile-almost 2 according to J.W. Firey Jr.- over the hills and through the woods and pastures, fording Rock Creek 3 times to get to Arch and Annie Stoneman (west and a little north of the Firey homeplace). He would have to leave his horse there and walk (or run) another 3/8 mile to the Coyote Trail where he would catch the bus. He did this for all 4 years of high school. If he was running a little late some mornings, Annie would unsaddle his horse for him.
2. Photo came from the Kathern Firey Thomas collection (photo of photo) on 5-12-09
3. In-person interview with J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. on 5-14-09
4. Personal interview with Kathern Firey Thomas 5-12-09.
5. Personal interview with J.W. "Bill" Firey on 5-14-09
6. Email correspondence with William Frank Firey 5-12 and 13, 2009
7. Telephone interview with J.W. "Bill" Firey on 5-13-09
8. Email correspondence with William Frank Firey on 5-13-09
9. The Cockburn kids were the children of Dan & Bertha. Dan's mother was Etila Cockburn-sister of Sally Huff. Bertha Cockburn's sister, Vera Lee, was O.L. Douglas' mother. O.L. and Evelyn Douglas purchased the schoolhouse in 1952. As a coincidence, Evelyn Douglas originated from San Angelo, but did not know Sylvia Huff Firey (also from San Angelo) until Oklahoma. (information based on WF Firey email and Evelyn Douglas phone conversation.)
10. Telephone Interview with Evelyn Douglas 5-15-09 / Also J.W. "Bill" told me about them on 5-14-09,  
Telephone interview with Evelyn Douglas in June, 2009—some clarifications made as to improvements. Six Photos on previous page contributed by Evelyn Douglas on July 24, 2009.
11. Telephone interview with Jerry Herrington on 5-13-09-he said 1976 / Evelyn Douglas said the year was 1978
12. Personal Interview with J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. 5-14-09  
Telephone interview with Jerry Herrington May 13, 2009
13. Found obituary online for a Lillian Ruth Daniel that fits the description of who Aunt Kathern remembered as Lillian McDaniels or Daniels. Lillian Daniel (born in 1909, died in 1991) taught at Pleasant Valley School but shows to be in Lincoln County. All else fits. (<http://boards.ancestry.com/localities.northam.usa.states.oklahoma.counties.creek/802/mb.ashx?pnt=1>)

# PLEASANT VALLEY SCHOOL

This is the general layout of the rebuilt 1936 school house as recollected by J.W. "Bill" Firey, Jr. on 5-15-09. Obviously, proportion and scale may be off but this gives a general idea of the school house configuration.\*



\*As the writer of the article and "doodler" of this sketch, I was amazed about the clarity of Uncle Bill's recollections-as if it were yesterday instead of 70 years ago. Being a generation younger than Uncle Bill, I would be hard pressed to remember a fraction of the same details about my elementary school. - Diana Firey