

Beach School

The first Beach school was started in 1937 when a group of mothers, feeling the need of more formal schooling than the hit and miss instruction their offspring were getting, set about to obtain some kind of a school. After searching for suitable facilities, examining the financial need and the sources of potential help, these women learned that the County School Board would pay a teacher and furnish her with a desk--the rest they must do on their own, And they did!

Free-will offerings were taken to pay the rent on a building, the Mayhew Page cottage on the Gulf side of Estero Boulevard on what is now Cottage Street, a block south of the Chapel by the Sea. Miss Lois Alexander (now Mrs. James Congdon) was hired as the teacher for \$80 a month, and eleven first grade children, five second graders and seven third graders enrolled.

The mothers of the pupils saw to it that the children got to school on time and regularly, that they had hot lunches on cold days and that there was not too much monkey business. They had worked too hard for the school to allow for much beyond an education.

Within the year, the student body had outgrown the cottage and parents went out and raised money for a new school. Two and one half acres of land were given by a Mr. Pence, Fort Myers people donated much material, and labor was provided by the W.P.A. The County School Board contributed the furnishings but the mothers painted the building and bought a piano. Miss Ardys Klenzing was hired as a second teacher.

In 1942 Mrs. Alvin Bassett, who is "Mrs. Beach Public School," came as a teacher, and Mrs. Rodger Shawcross was added to the staff. Later Mrs. Bassett was assigned to other schools in the county but in 1955 she returned here as principal where she remained until her retirement in 1964. In 1949, when the present school was built, the School Board gave the original building to become a community hall. The Fort Myers Beach

Woman's Club assumed the upkeep and administration of the hall. In 1963 the Board sold the two and a half acres donated by Mr. Pence, to the Beach Woman's Club and the Mosquito Control Board for \$12,000. Not a bad land

deal!

Photographs of the Winkler Hotel and the lush vegetation on the Island Bridge appear at this point in the book (p.27)