

A snowy walk back in time

By Judith Beaudet-Reed

SENECA — Seneca School students in grades three through eight kicked off the fifth year of the Seneca History Project on Nov. 8 with a tour of the Bear Valley Lodge. The Edward Hines Lumber Co. built the lodge in 1944 to serve as a boarding house for single male employees.

The students gathered in the large lobby, walls paneled with pine milled in Seneca and the floor pocked by cork boots. After reviewing the building's history, they divided into three groups to tour the upstairs, the main floor, and the basement.

Some of the many rooms remain as they were when last in use, with single bed frames inside and room numbers still on the door frames. Some are in various stages of renovation. One wing has been lovingly remodeled by the current owner, Jeannie Griffith, and her former husband.

In the basement, students saw the remains of the old heating system, which utilized steam piped across the Silvies River from the railroad shops. They crowded into the room where loggers once changed their work clothes before going upstairs to their rooms.

The students expressed a desire for someone to buy the lodge and continue the restoration work to preserve this historic remnant of Seneca's past.

Following the tour of the old boarding house, the third- and fourth-grade class, accompanied by upper-grade students



Contributed

Jolynn Bishop and Amanda Branstetter inside Room 224 of the Bear Valley Lodge. The Edward Hines Lumber Co. built the lodge in 1944 to serve as a boarding house for single male employees.

new to the school, walked through six inches of new snow to tour other sites significant to Seneca's history.

The first stop was where the business district once stood, just south of the hotel. After the disastrous fire of 1981, nothing is left of the building that once housed the mercantile, post office, restaurant, tavern, barber shop, Coconut Grove, gas station and the Olive Theatre.

Looking east, students visualized the "cheese box" houses and boxcar houses that once lined the logging road to Logan Valley.

Stopping next at the pasture just south of the junction of Highway 395 and the Shirttail Creek Road, the students imagined the famed Seneca Loggers out there on the former baseball field after another victory.

After crossing the Silvies

River, the group stopped at the junction of the main railroad grade that once carried logs from Bear Valley to the mill in Hines. They looked up the snowy slope of Cat Test Hill, where mechanics once drove the Cats straight up the hill to test them before returning them to the woods.

Walking on, the next stop was the concrete slab where the huge railroad shops once stood. Remains of track that carried the engines into the shops can be seen, but little else. Just east of the shops site is the location of the company swimming pool, which was heated with steam from the steam plant. The students stood in the snow at the bottom of the deep end, where some of the blue-painted concrete is visible.

The students then headed back to their school, which is yet another, and still vibrant, part of Seneca's colorful past, having been built in 1932 by the Hines Lumber Co.

During this school year, the Seneca History Project will again focus on interviews of people who once lived and worked in Seneca during the heyday of the Hines Lumber Co.

Students would like to hear from anyone who once lived in the Bear Valley Lodge, as there are many unanswered questions about life there.

For more information about the history project, or to participate, call Adele Cerny at Seneca School, 542-2542.

• *Judith Beaudet-Reed is a retired Seneca School teacher.*