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My name is Nell (Helen) Marshall. As a child I was Nellie Skene and in February 1930 I was enrolled at Mayfield East Public School. The next six years were very happy. Because the children of Lysaghts workers were also attending the school, there were seven extra portable timber classrooms. Even so there was little room to spare. The playground did not have a bitumen surface, it was earth covered with rocks, so each day we cleared a space, which became "ours" to play hopscotch. Mrs Timbury was our first teacher, I believe she had 60 children in her class of infants.

Later we were taught to write with slates and pencils, then books and pencils. We also gained a bitumen playground, a great luxury, because we could have a maypole. All the girls loved the maypole and seeing the wide ribbons weaving together. The steps required concentration.

Learning to write with pen and ink was a serious business. We took turns to mix the ink powder and water, and we used stone bottles to pour the result into our ink wells. Then the instructions, "sit up straight, feet together left hand flat on desk. Pick up pens (wooden with a steel nib), dip carefully into ink. Now begin to write. There was the sound of scratching nibs on paper. No mercy was given to left handed pupils. Girls had (their) left hand tied behind their back. I had to tie a girl's hand up until we both cried and then Mrs Butler stopped the practice.

Long rope skipping games were popular, as were tennis balls thrown against the school walls for "sevens". We were very active in the playground.

In 1935 we had a class teacher named Miss Hopman, sister to a famous tennis player. The whole class loved her, as she was the first teacher we saw who used lipstick.

For school outings such as swimming and appearances by the choir we walked down to Maitland Road to catch a tram. Mrs Murray conducted the boys choir, and the girls were trained by the lady teachers. Both choirs were in demand for concerts and civic events.

In winter we had coal fires in class rooms, with the buckets of coal carried upstairs by the boys. I also remember efforts by men teachers and sixth class boys as they tried to pull an upright piano from the ground to the upstairs verandah.

Thank you Mayfield East for all my happy memories.

Nell Marshall