

Life at the orphanage

By LENA ANDREE

(From BRISTOL BAY BYLINES)

My sister and I were placed in the orphanage in 1931, because the aunt that had been taking care of us died that year. When we went into the orphanage at Kanakanak, we both had long hair. The first thing the orphanage did was to shave our heads and burn our clothes. This was standard procedure with all the new kids that came in. They did this to get rid of lice. It was really a shock to us to be bald-headed, though.

When I was there the boys lived in one dorm and the girls in another. We all ate together in the same dining room, though.

They had a dark room that they put the boys in to punish them, usually for stealing or fighting. Girls did not get put in there, though; I guess we acted pretty good.

(Taken from THE STORY KNIFE)

At the orphanage we were not allowed to speak our Native language. We were there to learn English and if we spoke our Native tongue, we were punished. Our language was secondary. It should have been first with English secondary. I was really scared to start to school because of the language problem, but I had to go and I had to speak English.

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