

“THIS STORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER’S FIRST SCHOOL DAYS AND HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL WAS REMEMBERED AND PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER”

Signed, Frances Mae Drengson

DEER CREEK SCHOOL OF EARLY DAYS

By Mrs. George Haight (nee Florence Lewis) 1920

Deer Creek School No. 1 was founded in the year of 1871. As I am the only pupil living that attended that school I have been asked to write a history of same.

The settlers there at that time were Charles Hutchins, Henry Wandell, Chauncy Loomis, Henry Ward, Chandler Hoyt, Mrs. Huldah Sherman, Robert Ward, Nick Keller, George Rouse, and Mrs. Emma Tillotson, all with families and Florence Lewis (myself), a fourteen children on all. Naturally the parents began to think about school. It was then all the men met and organized the first school board, which was compromised of Gorge Rouse, Charles Hutchins, and Nick Keller. They remind in office for several years. Since there were three old bachelors in the neighborhood it was decided to hold the new school in one of their old huts. Israel Hutchins’ was the chosen one. It was located where Charles Schroaders’ farm home now stands.

George Gray, a second bachelor, was chosen as teacher as all thought him the best qualified and too, he was a cripple, both feet being amputated at the instep. He and two brothers were out in a raging blizzard for three days. They had gone hunting and became lost. Both brothers’ toes were frozen off but George was left only his heels to walk on. This

happened in Iowa in 1868. Then the board approached George and made known their wishes, he said he would teach providing they would allow him to bring his horses along. It was agreed that school should open the first of April. So on the day appointed, we children all gathered at the old log hut. All were awaiting the arrival of our teacher. All at once one of the children commenced to laugh, as he pointed toward the old bachelor's home. True to his word there came George Gray with seven head of horses. He rode one and the six followed behind. They came all through that term and it is hard to say who learned the most, we or the horses. We began the school with fourteen pupils. They were as follows: Frank Wandell, James Koryta, three from Henry Ward's, three from Robert Ward's two from Hann Hoyt's one from Huldah Sherman's three from Tillotson's and myself.

Our school had been on its way about a month when there came a knock at the door one day. "Come in", said the teacher. Who do you suppose walked in...Six Great Big Indians!... and I'll assure you there was no little noise then. Some yelled and some ran to the teacher, while others were too frightened to do either. However, Mr. Gray soon got us all quieted. The Indians stayed about an hour and had just come in to see if we could give them something to eat. And we had nothing for them they went up to Mrs. Wendell's who gave them all a splendid dinner.

I shall now try and tell how our little school hut was built. Mr. Hutchins hauled logs from the Elkhorn River, he then hewed off both sides, put the one on top the other and filled the openings with grass and mud. For the roof he put on poles, trash and grass and lastly dirt. There was one window and a door large enough for a barn.

The first year we had no floor, but the second they sawed slabs and placed them round side down. Benches were made of slabs also with four sticks driven in for legs and unless we all sat just so, down all would go which often happened as we youngsters of this rudely constructed hut were in for a good time occasionally, just as the children of the modern schools of today and often times all that were on one slab or bench would find

themselves on the floor. The first term lasted four months. Mr. Gray received \$35.00 per month and boarded himself. He taught one term.

Miss Sarah Crook taught one year and Nellie Crook one year, all in this little log hut 14 x 16 feet. There were no districts or precincts at this time but later on the same year Henry A. Barnes organized District No. 10, and the following spring found seven districts organized. In July the apportionment from the State arrived for District No. 10 in the amount of \$53.72.

In the year of 1873 the country had become so thickly settled the need of a new school building was felt by all. Again the men volunteered to go in together and build a new one, hauling the logs from the Elkhorn River and constructing it much the same as the old one but some larger. It was built on the east corner of Henry Ward's place now owned by Mary Lucht. It was completed in 1874 and valued at \$200.00. There were again no desks to be seen just benches were built around the room with the stove in the center. The pupils did all their writing on their laps except when they passed up to the recitation bench. The only piece of furniture being the teacher's chair. The first teacher in the newly built school was Miss Alice Deery, who taught three months. The next, Mrs. George Boune, who taught six months, held a third grade certificate, whipped fourteen of the largest boys in one day. A great disturbance was experienced one day when a large snake dropped from the dirt ceiling with a mouse in it's mouth. Everyone was on the benches for a while then. We were just as mischievous or more so in school No. 2 as we were in No. 1, so one day before the teacher arrived, one of the older boys thought it would be a huge joke to smoke her out. He then filled the chimney with hay but the teacher was not so easily fooled and very soon found out who the culprit was and a good old fashioned punishing followed.

For my schooling what little I received, I got it from the first two schools in the old huts. I walked five miles everyday to school – two and a half miles each way, and they were long miles at that. We lived where Mr. Ben Halsey now lives and the schoolhouse was just a little west of Harry

Reeker's place. I walked this distance for about four or five years. Once in a while I would ride horse back when the horses were not in use. I had to start at eight o'clock sharp in order to get there in time. One morning I went to see what time it was, and right on the clock was a great big snake, his head hanging right on the face of the clock, almost at eight. Of course I hollered and my foster sister took a large pair of tongs and brought him down and killed him. It was a deadly poison snake, called a bend snake. We have only seen three of them for the settlers seem to have driven them out of this part of the country.

The teachers were never paid more than \$35.00 per month and often less. The terms were from three to six months. The first County Superintendent that visited school No. 2 was E. M. Squires in 1875, who found there were no two books alike in the entire school, just odds and ends that the different parents had. The following is a list of the teachers who taught in the log house besides the two mentioned above: Mrs. Mary Kidder, wife of Rev. Kidder who founded the first Congregational Church at Norfolk, Nebraska; Mrs. Rork; Moose Morgan, Mrs. Clark Heacock; David Whitla; George Gray; Miss Fannie Mumm; Miss Celia Sherman and Mr. Morgan known as "Crooked Nose" Morgan. All the education I received was at these two little huts. Several years later after my marriage to Mr. George W. Haight, he purchased the structure for \$1.00. It was consigned to the cook stove for firewood and as I rocked the cradle and gazed into the glowing embers it was with a pang, for the memories of childhood have a strong hold on the human heart. Thus ends Deer Creek School No. 2.

And now for School No. 3. I was married in the year of 1880 and did not think much about school until my own children became of school age. I think it was in the year of 1879 that a meeting was called and a new board organized as some of the old board had moved away and others passed away. The new board were C. N. Hutchins, director; George Gray, Treasurer; and Henry Wandell, Moderator. They decided that school No. 2 was becoming too small to properly accommodate the children of District No. 10 and that steps should be taken to build a much larger frame building and that it should be more centrally located. The new building was erected one half mile west and three fourths miles south of the old site, by a Mr.

Muffly and Mr. Toole and was 36 x 24 feet with blackboards across the entire west end. It was equipped with the best of desks and seats to be had at that time. The first to teach in the new building was a Mr. Blackmire followed by a Mrs. Mary Kidder, who had previously taught in the second log schoolhouse. Then Sara Parks taught one term in 1881; Celia Sherman the spring term at \$15.00 per month in 1883. The fall term of four months was taught by Mattie Bightmire at \$20.00 per month. A Mr. Ely Wildermoth then taught three months at the same price, starting January 25th, 1884. Mattie Bightmire again teaching four months and boarding with us at the time. She insisted on taking our daughter Frances. Thus she entered school at the age of three years. A. L. Squire was the next teacher in line with a raise of \$5.00 per month teaching in 1885; Belle Marr in 1886 five months at \$35.00 per month; Sue Cooper three months at \$30.00 again teaching the fall term. She was twenty-three years old and held a second grade certificate. She had been educated in Ohio and later at Neligh, Nebraska.

Superintendent Bohamon called at this time. Our daughter remembers it as though it were yesterday. It was a bitter cold day, October 26th when he arrived at 9:00 A.M. In a report he made he stated, "It had no vestibule, no book case, no globe, one map, no books or reference. The schoolroom was neat and pleasant, the fourteen pupils orderly, quiet, studious, obedient and interested. That they were very well advanced and T. W. Lintecum was Director". Miss Cooper again taught the spring term of three months followed by her sister Ella the fall term, at \$45.00 per month. In 1888 John Wright taught three months at \$32.50 followed by Julia Nicholas who was forced to give up teaching at the close of the second month on account of poor health. There was no school until the following September opening with C. R. Boyer as teacher. On October 16th Mr. Bohamon again visited the school and rated the pupils as "quite noisy". Mr. Boyer taught six months at \$38.00, also taught the spring term. This brings us to until 1889 and shows the terms were short and salaries small. The highest was \$45.00 and Miss Ella Cooper. Names of teachers and dates from now on are as follows:

1889 M. W. Morgan, six months; W. H. Westervelt, Director; and D. B. Daniel, Moderator.

1890 – W. A. Pominger, three months; J. H. Werner six months; J. H. Palmer, Director; and David Phillips, Moderator.

1891 – Charles E. Morton, three months; John Erskine, three months; J. H. Palmer, Director, S. H. Thatch, Moderator, and Charles Schroader, Treasurer.

1892 – Miss Carrie Hall, five months, and in 1893, five months.

By this time the attendance had increased to fifty-two pupils and was so crowded it was necessary to build an addition of twenty feet, and this makes the entire building 24 x 56 feet. The new addition was built by Kerner Brothers of Battle Creek and painted inside and out by Deb. Willberger, and Bert Cossairt. With new desks, seats and additional blackboard, District No. 10 was again proud of their school building. School continued with A. F. Crandall, one month and K. A. Romineer three months in 1893 – J. L. Derrick, Director.

1894 – Eileen Curas, six months; J. L. Derrick, Director; James Clark, Moderator.

1895 – Eileen Curas, five months; Josie Avery four months; J. L. Derrick, Director.

1896 – Josie Avery, four months; Frank Jenkins, Director.

1897 – Viretta Ervin, two months; Pearl Reese, three months; Frank Jenkins, Director and W. H. Westervelt, Moderator

1898 – Pearl Reese, nine months, and 1899; Pearl Reese, four months; A. H. Palmer, Director.

1901 – 1902 – Mattie Simmons; Herman Eucker, Director.

1903 – 1904 – 1905 – Elizabeth Zimmerman. It was under Miss Zimmerman that our present County Judge, E. L. Reeker entered school at the age of six years. He attended the Deer Creek school five years then

parochial school at Battle Creek, three years; Creighton University, one year; and was a post graduate of Indianapolis, Indiana, studied law at Lincoln, Nebraska, one year and began practicing law at Norfolk, 1921.

He was elected Judge of Madison County 1924 where he is still serving. Thus Deer Creek feels greatly honored that Judge E. L. Reeker received his early training at Deer Creek School District No. 10.

1906 – 1907 – 1908 – were taught by Wayne Kielty; J. H. Burch was Director, and G. W. Haight, Moderator.

1909 – Jennie Ingoldsby – L. R. Funk, Director; G. W. Haight, Moderator.

1910 – Alta Morgan – J. E. Young, Director; Frank Braun, Moderator, and Lewis Braun, Treasurer.

1911 – Margaret Regan and Laura Carter – Frank Braun, Director.

It was decided at this time to put in high school work. In order to do so they built a partition and employed two teachers, Besse Etter as Principal and Ellice Craig, the lower grades. They taught in 1912 and 1913, at salaries, \$50.00 and \$60.00 the first year with a raise of \$5.00 each the second year. As there were several driving from a distance taking high school work, this called for a new barn, which was built 10 x 30 feet. The first pupil taking high school work was Lilly Schroeder. She took two years. Others taking up the work were Esther Burch, Hazel Burch, Ralph Luvall, and Martha Muller in 1914 – 1916. In 1914 – 1915 - Besse Etter, Principal. And Melle Hayes, grade teacher. Salary \$85.00 and \$60.00. Lewis Braun, Director; George Haight, Moderator; Otto Rodekoeh, Treasurer.

1916 enters Deer Creek School No. 4.

Superintendent, N. A. Housel at that time was very much interested in Deer Creek School. Since the additional high school work he felt like the parents did that the old building could no longer accommodate the pupils and the work they were doing. He set about to help them call a meeting to vote on the matter. The result was that the majority was in favor of a new building, deciding on two rooms each being 24 x 32 feet. That it should have a full basement and modern in every way. All thought the yard too small for a larger building and plenty of playground. I should have stated at the time first frame building was built. W. Bradshaw gave them the plot for as long a time as it would be used for that purpose with the understanding if at any time a change be made the land should go back to him. In the meantime Charles Schroader had purchased the Bradshaw homestead and came forth with the same offer giving them enough more making about two acres in all. This gave them ample room for all the new equipment that soon was to be installed, making a modern play ground along with their modern school. This so pleased the teachers and pupils; they extended a vote of thanks to Mr. Schroader with all their names signed. A building committee was appointed at once that comprised of G. W. Haight, John Rodekohr, Lewis Braun and Eddie Daniel. The building was let out to a C. C. Christenson of Meadow Grove, and was completed the last day of August 1918. On September 18th, the new building was dedicated with a large attendance from all parts of the county. A banquet was enjoyed by all and Deer Creek School No. 4 now stands, a monument not only to the early settlers but to the parents through all the years up until the present time. They have stood shoulder to shoulder overcoming difficulties without number, striving that their children might go forth into the world with an achievement that is more to be desired than great riches – An Education.

The first instructors in the new building were Pearl Sherlock Principal, and Florence Nightengale, grades with L Ruegge, Director and George Haight, Moderator. Those taking high school work were Marie Chrisman, Dorothy Wright, Arthur Rodekohr, Carl Rodekohr, Howell Palmer, Cleo Willet, Edna Ruegge, Martha Mueller, and Berneice Braun.

1918 – 1919- A. Johnson, Principal and Bessie Curran, grades. Ed Daniel Director, Sue Tegeler, Harry Reeker, Herman Schroader, Harry Tegeler, and Burleigh Sesler were high school pupils.

1919 – 1920- Esther Kelleher, Principal, and Martha Mueller, grades. Charles Schroader, Director, Henry Wisch, Moderator, and Elera Haight, Treasurer. Burleigh Kesler, Laura Reeker, Willie Stolle, Arden Haight, Pitt McCarrol, Violet Schroader, Pearl Fair, and Everett Tiedgen were high school pupils.

1921 – Sadie Mahm to January 1st, Bernice Simmons the rest of the year.

1922 – Ruby Huerst, Principal and Dorothy Wright grades. High school pupils were Arden Haight, Pitt McCarrol, Violet Schroader and Pearl Thayer.

1923 – 1924 – Sylvia Hughes, principal and Dollie Bowd, grades. Violet Schroader, Pitt McCarrol, Daisy Schroader, Irvin Tiedgen, Laura Henseleit, and Mildred Haight were pupils doing high school work which had consisted of ninth and tenth grade work all along. There being so few in 1925, school opened with just one teacher, Hazel Osborn. She also taught in 1926 and 1927 Rudy Tiedgen, Director; Henry Wisch, Moderator, Elera Haight, Treasurer.

1928 – Ruth Braun teaching and Dorothea Tiedgen in 1929.

1930 – Begins the New Year with Frances Raymond as teacher and Lester Fowlken, Director; Henry Wisch, Moderator, and Lewis Braun, Treasurer.

Four of the above named teachers held the distinction of being born in the district and a graduate of the school; Miss Anna Mueller, Mrs. Martha Mueller Haman, (sisters) Mrs. Ruth Braun Scott, and Miss Dorothea Tiedgen. All were present and participated in the event except Mrs. Haman now residing in Omaha.

Those serving on the school board longest were: C. N. Hutchins, C. W. Lintecum, George Gray, Charles Schroader, Lewis Braun and George W. Haight, who was on the board off and on for thirty-six years. We boarded and roomed twenty-five teachers during that time. Although it has been eleven years since we left the farm and the people of Deer Creek, we still feel that sentimental affection for the old school.

County Superintendents that have been in office since this school was founded in 1871 are as follows:

L. F. Taylor, October 10, 1871

F. A. Cogswell, October 14, 1873;

H. M. Squires, October 12, 1875

George G, Hurford, November 6, 1877

J. H. R. Sullivan, November 4, 1879

E. M. Squires, August 11, 1881

L. H. Bohanon, November 31, 1885 died October 13, 1891

Mrs. Edith Johnson filling vacancy, October 22, 1891.

R. G. Mossman, November 31, 1891

C. F. Crum, November 2, 1897. It was he that got the record of school district boundaries into good shape.

E. K. Purdue, November 7, 1905

N. A. Mausel, January 7, 1909, appointed first then elected:

Alice Hall January 1923 who served in this capacity for seven years and given such excellent service that to day she stands in the field without and opponent.

I have given forth the history of the above school to the best of my knowledge and it has been a pleasure for me to do this as it takes me back again to my childhood also the childhood of my four children all of them attended the same school. To many I know it is a picture that will long be remembered as it stands today facing the morning sun on the banks of the stream for which it was named. It was here that nimble deer abounded in vast numbers and was given its name Deer Creek by the red men. I feel sure there is not a pupil that has attended this school that cannot recall many happy moments of recess time or noon hours spent along its banks. In summers the girls would gather flowers, mint and fish for minnows, clams and snails. When the boys built dens and wigwams of the swaying reeds. They again all would dance the Virginia Reel or the old square dances to the tune of a mouth harp or violin fashioned from a cigar box, on the bridge within sight of the teacher at her desk. In winter they would toboggan down its banks and across the old skating pond. Today all are gone but memory lingers. This finishes my picture and as I lay down my pen I trust who ever chances to pick it up, may continue with as favorable reports of Deer Creek School in the next fifty years as I have in the past forty-nine.