Hickory Grove - Dist. #27

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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Humanities on the Frontier

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HISTORIC SITE FORM

State Nebraska County Nemaha

Location (in miles & direction from nearest town) 1½ mi. west and 1½ mi. south of Auburn, Nebraska

Is this the original location? No, original location 3 mi. west of present location. Present building constructed 1872.

Name of building & origin of name Hickory Grove not certain why named.

Name & number of the district Hickory Grove, Dist. 27. Was dist. 3 in territorial days.

Date built 1872 Years in use

Who built it? A contractor or the community? A contractor, a Mr. Luedke.

Does it look like it came from a plan book or was it designed by the community? Similar in design to many others--a plan book.

Names of former teachers: Bernice Mayer, Mrs. Jerry Carlson, Joyce Carmen, Luetta Volker, Mrs. Don Eitzman, Mrs. Wilma Stutheit.

Names of former students (family names only): Strong, Oestman, Schlange, Moerer, Bohling.

Name & address of person in charge of building:

Who is the owner?

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

Architectural Features:

Size of building approx. 20' x 24'

Number of Windows (four pane, six pane, etc.)

3 on each side. Leanto on rear.

Number of doors (entrances)

1 in front, one in leanto

Number of classrooms

1

Bell tower or cupola

no

Materials used (wood, brick, stone, etc.)

stone

Type of roof

gable, shingled.

Outhouses

yes

Playground Equipment

none

Color of building & trim

brown, white trim.

Coal shed or stable

yes

Teacherage

no

Flagpole

yes

Other architectural features:

Nothing left inside.

Narrative Information: Did any special events happen at the school? What stories do people remember?

See attached history. Once had "German" school for two months in winter, alternately with English.

Current condition & use:

Not in use. Needs paint.

District records available: yes

Black & white photo taken: yes

Old photos available: yes

Does the building have any state or national historic designation?

Name & address of surveyor

date
The year 1862 marked the beginning of a school district which was to play a part in the education of more than four hundred children during its first century of existence. This was District 3 located in the Washington Township of Nemaha County, Nebraska Territory; later to become District 27.

On February 15, 1862, a Board of Directors was elected for the common school in Washington Township. Herman Utecht was elected for the three-year term; Edward Schnider, for the two-year term; and Franz Moerer, for the one-year term. Herman Utecht was Township Clerk as well as School Board Secretary. School was held in a small one-room building located on Franz Moerer’s farm, three miles west of the site on which the District 27 schoolhouse is presently located. There is no record of the students who attended school here. Perhaps no records were kept in those days due to irregular attendance of students. Or if records were kept, they have become lost through the years. The only records for the years 1862-1869 record the election of the Board of Directors. Some of the teachers who taught in the early years of District 3 were: Lizzie Simpson, A. Opperman, and E. Juel.

In 1869, the directors of District 3 purchased the half acre of land where the present school stands. Barney Ottens, George Ottens, and Frederick Oestmann bought the land from Emma, Frederick and Diedrich Oestmann for one dollar. The deed was signed on December 20, 1869 and witnessed by Conrad Harms, Justice of the Peace. About 1870, District 3 became District 27, due perhaps to reorganization or division of districts in Nemaha County.

The schoolhouse built of stone was completed in 1872. It was built by Mr. Luedke. A fence was built around the school yard. Frederick Oestmann contracted to deliver eighty fence posts at eighteen cents a post, each of which was to average 3x4 inches on the small end. Bernard Ottens and Peter Hoops delivered 1400 feet of lumber for the fence at 30 cents per hundred feet. Diedrich Oestmann built the fence for five dollars. A 4'x8' privy was built for eight dollars.

The schoolhouse has been used not only for educational purposes, but also as a community building. It served as a church when the St. Paul Lutheran Church (Hickory Grove) was organized until the church was built in 1877. Records state that church services were held alternately in the Franz Moerer and Diedrich Oestmann (Dist. 27) schoolhouses. Henry Gebers and Marie Garbers were united in marriage in this
schoolhouse. Throughout the years, the schoolhouse has been used for Farm Bureau meetings. At the present time, the Hickory Grove 4-H Club, which was organized here, holds its meetings at the schoolhouse.

Four 4-pupil and four 2-pupil recitation benches were made for the school. It was agreed to have German School. A law was passed that all children in the district between the ages of five to fourteen must attend school at least three days a week or pay a five dollar fine.

School was held in the new building for the first time on November 1, 1872, with Henry Clary as the teacher. In 1878, D. Rogge became the teacher and was paid $25 a month. There were three months of German and English school beginning December 1. The next year there were three months of English school in winter and two months of German school in summer.

The German school was taught or "kept" by Rev. H. Rehwoldt for twelve dollars a month. While D. Rogge was teacher, school was held in his house since he was crippled. In 1881, the school was taught by Mary Crandell for $22 a month. Only dry wood was accepted for fuel that year.

The three-month term in 1881-1882 was taught by Jacob Egely who received $28.75 per month. Only English was taught in school by this time. In 1882-1883, the school term was extended to six months. Bessie Leech was hired to teach for $29 a month. As a rule men teachers received higher wages than female teachers. Grey Taggert was paid $30 a month for teaching in 1883-1884.

In 1884, three desks were made for the children to write on. C. H. Burkeholder received $40 a month for teaching the 1884-1885 term. At this time the teacher signed a contract not only to teach, but also to keep the schoolhouse in good repair and to furnish the necessary fuel.

D. Rogge returned in 1885 to teach the two and a half month spring term for $33.33 1/3. The spring term began in April. At this time the wood stove was exchanged for a coal burner. The coal was hauled for a dollar a load. Later this price was changed to a dollar and a half a load. The highest price paid for coal while using it for fuel was a little more than three dollars a ton. The winter term began the first Monday in December and was taught by John C. Ward.

A spilt term was taught again in 1886. A two-month term began on April 26 and a 6½ month winter term began in September. Henry Clary came back to teach in District 27 and taught until 1889. The coalhouse was built in this year and the deed to the schoolhouse was recorded.
In 1887 an additional month of school was added to the spring term making a total of nine months of school that year. Twelve desks were made for two dollars. The old stove was sold for $8.25. D. Oestmann was hired to make another privy.

During these years, there were only three grades—primary, intermediate, and grammar. Many of the students were between the ages of 16 and 26. However, many of them were immigrants who went to school mainly to learn English. Attendance was very irregular. Some people today can still recall how some teachers would allow them to go hunting during schooltime if they brought him part of their prey.

Five more desks were added in 1888. There were three terms in 1888-1889. A six-month term extended from September 3, 1888 to March 22, 1889; a five-week term, from February 25, 1889 to March 29, 1889; and a three-week term from April 8, 1889 to April 26, 1889. There were only six students attending during the three-week term.

John H. Gelmer taught in District 27 from 1889-1893. His salary began at $40 and rose to $47.50. During these years there were six months of school each year, split between a spring and winter term. In 1890 a new roof was put on the schoolhouse and the ceiling was raised two feet. The schoolhouse was painted the following year and almost every other year thereafter was either painted or repaired.

An 8’x8’ wood platform was put by the front door in 1891. During the 1891-1892 school term 49 students attended the Hickory Grove School. This is the largest attendance ever recorded for the school. Their ages ranged from five to twenty-six. Usually the attendance was between thirty and forty.

Two new seats, seven feet long, were added in 1893. The thirty-three students were taught by John Clarke for $45 a month. However the next year, Marie Frerichs taught 41 students for only $35 a month. A new privy was built that year also.

In 1895, District 27 lost part of its territory. Because children had to travel quite a distance and there was little transportation, District 80 (Rohrs School) was organized between Districts 27 and 23 (Linden School), taking some territory from both districts. In 1961, due to the fact that District 80 was closed, the land which had formerly been a part of District 27, was returned to its original district. Therefore District 27 is now back to its original size.

Lena R. Frerichs taught from November 6, 1895 until January 8, 1896. Wm. M. Crichton completed the term from January 8 to May 1, 1896. C. E. Jewell became the teacher in
July of that year and taught until 1898. In 1897, an addition to be used for the cloakroom was built onto the east side of the schoolhouse.

E. N. Williamson taught during the 1898-1899 school term. At this time a new coalshed (10'x12'x6') was built. Also the chimney was moved to the west end of the schoolhouse. In 1901, a new door and floor were put in the schoolhouse.

Teaching from 1899 to 1909 were: Wm. M. Crichton, 1899-1900; Edward C. Wittwer, 1900-1902; Lester Armstrong, 1902-1903; L. Nemaha Clarke, 1903-1904; H. W. West, 1904-1907; James A. Hill, November 1907; Grace Relf, 1907-1908; Ethel Elliott, 1908-1909. Their salaries ranged from $37.50 to $50.

In June of 1908, Fred Oestmann was elected Director of the School Board for District 27 and held this position until June of 1935. He held this position longer than any other Director in District 27.

High school tuition was paid by the District for the first time in 1909. J. K. Curzan was the first person in the district to take advantage of this paid tuition. Jesse R. Lechliter was the teacher for that term. Also in this year, L. Nemaha Clarke, a former teacher of Hickory Grove School, became County Superintendent.

At the end of the 1910 school term, the teacher, Jesse Lechliter, wrote the following remarks: “The school needs text books. These should be furnished by the school district. At least two different kinds of readers should be in every school. As long as the parents have to furnish the books, there will be but one kind.

The pupils need to be encouraged to use the English language more. They are very good in figures, but can not think for themselves.”

In 1911, the Board of Directors voted to furnish all necessary textbooks for the district. Before this time, parents had to buy all the textbooks for the children.

Cora Guilliatt, Mae Relf, Verne H. Wright, Ruby Tolman, and Daphne Miles taught in District 27 from 1910 to 1915. Myrtle Parriott was the teacher from 1915-1917; Eva Stewart from 1917-1919; and Edith West from 1919-1920. Their salaries rose from $40 a month in 1911 to $90 a month in 1919. During this time new seats were furnished for the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was painted and repaired. School terms varied from seven to nine months. In 1921, it was decided to have
Josie Lutz became the teacher in 1920. For the next fifteen years—except for one year (Ernst Plager, 1927-1928)—Miss Lutz and her relatives were in charge of education at Hickory Grove School. Josie taught from 1920-1927; her niece, Miss Loretta Lutz, taught in 1928-1929; and Mrs. Mae Geick, sister of Josie Lutz, taught from 1929-1935; making a total of fourteen years. While Miss Josie Lutz was the teacher at District 27, she taught high school courses to one class.

The eighth grade of 1922 was the first class to take the examinations at Auburn and successfully pass the eighth grade exams. The students in the class were Elizabeth and Wm. Streng, Clarence and Augusta Oestmann, Alvin Schlange, Auguste Moerler and Adina Bohling.

In 1934, the present coalhouse and privies were built. From 1935 to the present day there has been a nine-month school term in District 27. A local girl, Irene Oestmann, was hired as teacher in 1935 and taught until 1940. Miss Oestmann was succeeded by Ruth Harkendorff. Madlyn Collins Susan taught from 1941-1945. Then in 1945-46, the school was taught by Maxine Norvell, local girl who had received her elementary education at Hickory Grove. Up until the year 1943, the highest paid teacher was Miss Josie Lutz, who received $125 a month.

The following is an account of a few materials purchased about 1936: Books and postage, $1.67; soap, .25; soap tray, .10; orange crates, .25; paint, .25; first aid supplies, .10; cleaning school, 3.50; books (library use), 4.80. Total, $10.97.

In 1937, at a special meeting, it was decided to build and equip a new school building and to change the site of the school. At the regular school meeting, it was voted to build a full basement under the new schoolhouse, and to remain on the present site, but to purchase an additional half acre. At another special meeting called in July of that year, the motion to issue $5,000 worth of bonds for the building of the new school was lost, so the new school was not built.

The schoolhouse was wired for electricity in 1939 after a motion was made at a school meeting to purchase lamps for the schoolhouse. The following year, it was decided to buy a piano for the school. A year later new seats were bought and a stage was built in the west end of the schoolhouse. The present water fountain was purchased in 1945.

Alvera Bohling became teacher in 1946. During her second term, the school began subscribing to the Rural Circulating Library, giving the students more opportunity to read books.
A PAGE FROM THE PAST

The annual meeting of the Board of

The school house was built with the help of Mr. John Smith, a local carpenter.

The meeting was held in the schoolhouse on September 10, 1882.

The minutes were signed by the following trustees:

- Robert Brown
- Mary Johnson
- John Smith

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Date]

[Additional notes or signatures]
In 1948 when Hala Vice became teacher, an oil burning stove and an outside tank were purchased for the school. Since the stove did not work as it should have, it was taken back and exchanged for another. Mary Lou Rears began teaching at District 27 that year and taught until 1951. By this time the salary of the teacher had been raised to $200 a month. During her term, gravel was placed on part of the playground.

Playground equipment was purchased in 1951. The schoolhouse floor was tiled that year also. Mrs. Wilma Stutheit was hired as teacher. The fluorescent lights were installed in the schoolroom. A record player and filmstrip projector were purchased to enrich the educational program.

In 1954, due to the efforts of Mrs. Stutheit and the Board of Directors, the Hickory Grove School received a Class A rating. This rating was based upon an evaluation of the school by the State Department of Public Instruction. District 27 was one of the first rural schools in Nemaha County to receive this rating.

Also 1954 was the first year that Kindergarten as such, was taught in the school. Previously, some of the students came for primary work for six weeks in the spring. There were three students in this first Kindergarten class. They were Carol Ehlers, Larry Norvell, and Larry Bohling.

Mrs. Odus Brunner became teacher in 1954 and taught until 1956. In 1955, a shelter was built for saddle horses since several of the students rode horses to school.

The teachers for the past six years at Hickory Grove have been: Mrs. Don Eitzmann, 1956; Luetta Volker, 1957; Joyce Carmen, 1957-1958; Mrs. Jerry Carlson, 1958-1960; Bernice Mayer, 1960-1962.

At the present time, sixteen students are attending the school, one of the largest rural schools in Nemaha County. Mrs. Mayer has contracted to teach again next year.

Seventy-six years ago (as far back as the records go) to the present time, ninety family names have been represented in District 27, formerly District 3. Four hundred thirteen children have received all or part of their elementary education at this school. For some families, children attending the school are the third, and possibly even the fourth, generation to have attended District 3-27. To cite one example, the name of one or more of the descendants of the late Wm. Bohling, Sr. have been on the enrollment records continuously since 1886.
Many wonderful, and in their own way, great people have passed through the doors of this small schoolhouse. For example, all four sons of the late Rev. Theodore Streng have followed their father’s footsteps to become ministers while two of his three daughters became ministers’ wives.

Yes, District 27 has come a long way in the last century. Its record has been a fine one—one of which neither the District nor anyone connected with it need be ashamed. With the grace of God, may its future be as proud!