

This story was Scanned and OCR'd into WORD from a yellow and tattered copy of the July 37 1939 edition of the El Paso Journal. My early pioneer G-grandfather Robert Mayne was on the Board to found this school and his descendants, my grandfather and his siblings, and my father and his brother attended this school.

by Richard F. Mayne EPHS '54

BETHEL REUNION

Old "Duck Pond" School District Number 96 Seventy-seven Years Old.

-On Sunday, July 16, beginning with a fine chicken dinner under the shade trees at noon, pupils and patrons of the olden days joined with those of the present time in a happy reunion at the Bethel school district 96, two miles south and two miles west of El Paso. There were 184 Persons enrolled on the day's register aside from a few others, who neglected to record themselves as "present." The attendants included former and present directors, teachers, and pupils from "away back when" pupils of the current "crop" patrons of the district and other guests who by marriage or otherwise qualified for the happy occasion.

History of School

Bethel school district was first organized as No. 6, El Paso township in compliance with a petition to the board of trustees filed on April 7, 1862. The new district as finally organized besides the south quarter of section 7 all of sections 13, 18, 19, and 24 in El Paso township, also embraces section 14 and all excepting the southwest quarter of 23 in Palestine township. This is the district's territory today.

The lands forming the district are owned and operated or tenanted by the following: Robert Mayne, E. J. Carmody, Lyle Armstrong, George Shuman, Mrs Belle Givens, Joseph Hitch, Rich. Mayne, Henry Dressler, Chas. Greaser Est., Ellen Hynes, Elizabeth Dressler, Henry Dressler, Jacob Dressler, I. King estate, Wm. Kearney Jr., F. Wendland, Clyde Roberts, Walter Berg, James McWilliams, Mrs. Ruth Schafer Engle, Jesse Malcom, Robert Shaffer, Mrs. Eloise Holland, Dan T., Kearney, M. Hynes Est., Lawrence Crusius, Sarah Eichenlaub, Luella Oster, H. J. Stiegelmeier. All the above pertain to that portion of the district within El Paso township. The following are in Palestine township: Mrs. P. R. Berg, Jesse Gray, Ernest Schwitters, Chas. Roberts, S. K. Sutton, Leo Roberts, Lawrence Sutton, John Gaines, M. J. .Mohr, Geo. Burroughs.

In re-mapping the township in 1863 to provide additional school districts, the only change in the Bethel school was making it No. 9 instead of No. 6. It remained No. 9 until 1902 when designate numbers were given all the schools on a county basis instead of by separate townships, as formerly. Bethel then became district 96, as at present.

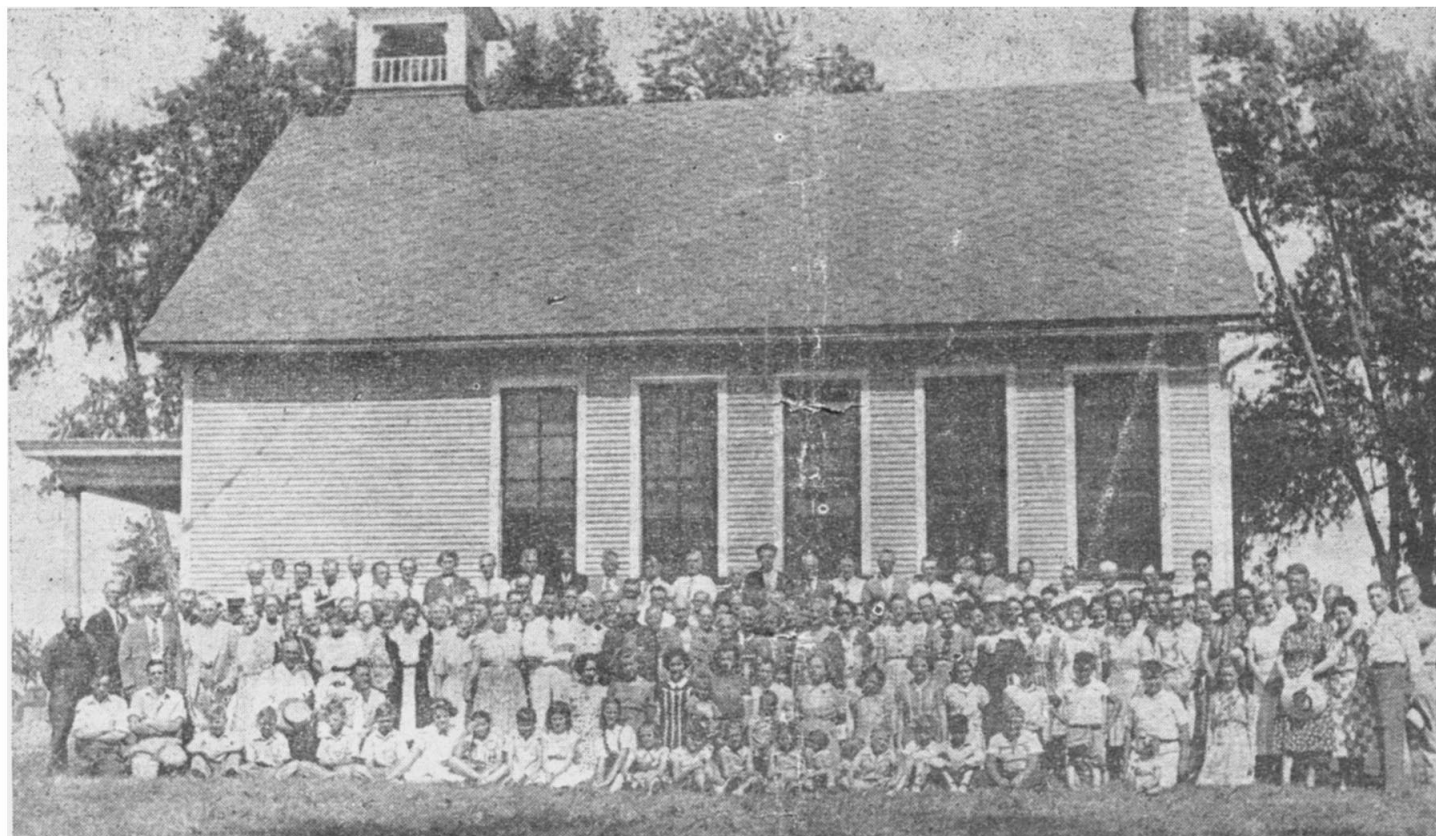
The April 7, 1862 petition asking for the formation of the Bethel district No. 6, was signed by Jacob McMaron, Christian Reust, Henry M. Wills, Melcher Sachs, George Tatro, A.M. .Montgomery, William Bowman, Nephey Bowman, Caleb Horn, and Richard Mayne.

It is presumed that the first building was erected soon after the district was formed. The first structure was replaced by the present modern one in 1917 and it is as complete in equipment as any one-room school in the territory where good country schools are the general vogue. No desired feature is lacking.

But, one wonders, while looking over the neatly and conveniently arranged seating accommodations, 20 modern units, how it was ever possible for 92 pupils to be tutored all at one time, as was done in the old building in the 70's. But some of the old timers aver (sic.) that that was the case. Miss. Rita Pierce, last spring's teacher and who has been re-engaged for the term beginning next fall had an enrollment of only 13 pupils last term. Either the old building was much larger than the present one (which the oldsters deny) or the quarters were considerably crowded. Today the farms are larger, the houses fewer, and the families smaller. Where today there are only two houses there used to be five. This one territory between the Leo Roberts and the Lawrence Sutton homes is an example.

As these columns noted last month in the write-up of the old McOمبر school which held a reunion on June 14 rural school years were generally divided into three terms, fall, winter, and spring, and often a different teacher ruled during the same school year. Mrs. A. C. (Mary Roper) Jones, one of early-day teachers and who attended last Sunday's reunion, tells us that she taught the Bethel school during the spring and fall terms of the years 1876, 1877, 1878, and 1879. Asked why she skipped the winter months she replied "it was too hard work." In the old days the farm boys had to shuck corn and chop and haul wood until about December 1. They then attended the winter term but had to return to

the farm work in the early spring. Thus it was in the three winter months that the pupil attendance was the largest and the average age the greater. A number of the older boys, some of them 21 years old and then some sometimes had ideas of conduct not so easy to meet and the three winter months generally required a regular he-man on the job. Mrs. Jones vacated during these interims and W. T. Ackerman filled in and made a good job of it, according to the stories told by some of the oldsters still living and who well remember their experiences. And they now agree that they deserved all they got, and maybe more. This detail is not confined to the period covered for the four years noted. It was not unusual for that times.



Upper Picture

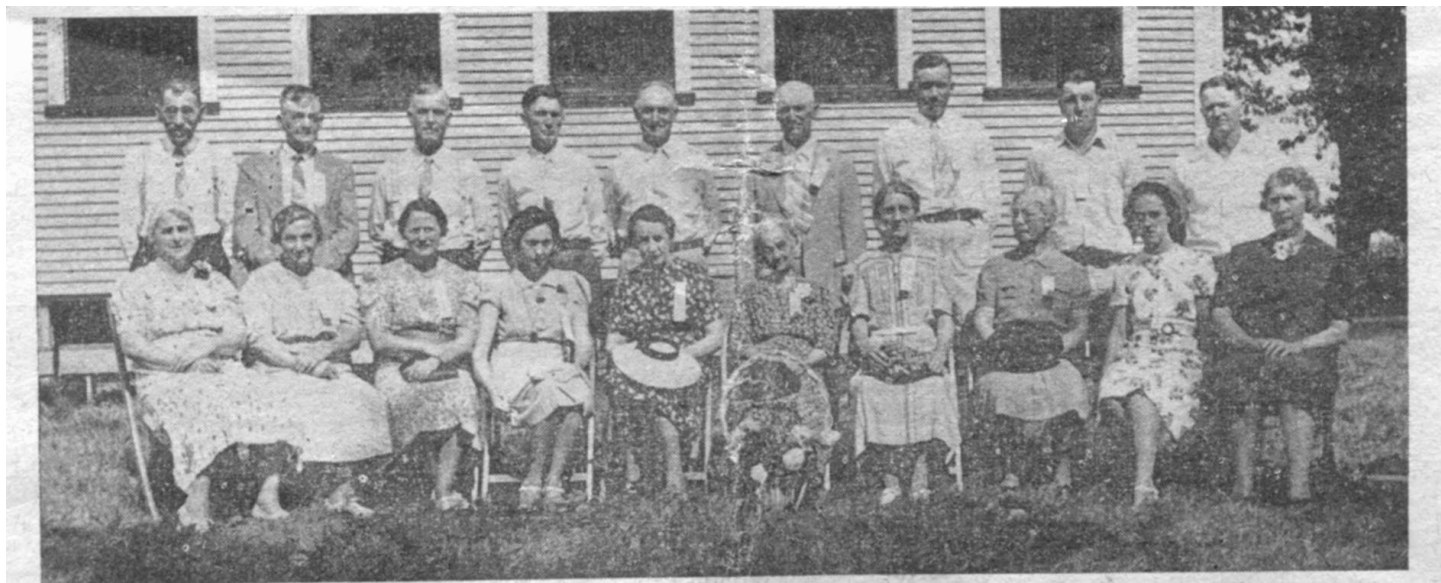
We cannot name the reunion attendants shown in this picture in order of their appearance therein. Following are those registered excepting that those named in pictures Nos. 2 and 3 are not repeated here:

Pupils still residing here—John and Walter Berg, Gene, Edson, George and Miss Edna Dressler, Helen Gaines, Francis Hynes, Ann Kearney, Floyd Malcom, Jerry, Lyle and Lawrence McWilliams, Rose Malcom, Lester and Lloyd Pfister, Mrs. Lloyd (Jettie Mayne) Pfleeger. Geraldine Rider, Bernadine, Agnes Sylvester, Clyde and Leo Roberts; Emery, Babe and Robert Shaffer, Ralph and Bernie Sutton, Elmyra Swan, Mrs. Ursula (Parr) Stitt,.

Pupils living elsewhere— Mrs. Melvin (Bess Patton) Armstrong, Longpoint; Mrs. Sam (Frida Fever) Culp, Washington; Clarence Crusius, Bloomington; Mrs. Lyle Duley, Peoria; George Damman, Bloomington; Clarence Fever, Gridley; Mrs. Emery (Shaffer) Garey, DeLong; William Haas, Raub Ind.; Mrs. Fred (Bernice Fever) Lampe and Clayton Rider, Gridley; Marjorie Shaffer, Maquon.

Guests: From El Paso— Robert Berg, Mrs. Horace Biebes, Mrs. Jacob Dressler, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dressler, Wilbur Duley, Louise Gaines, Betty Jo Hynes, A. C. Jones, Dan Kearney, J. H. Kyser, Mr. and Mrs. James McWilliams; Mrs. Anna, John and Mae Malcom,, Mr. and Mrs. Melven Mohr, Mrs. Jesse Melcom, Mrs. Robert Mayne, Marjorie and Mrs. Rich. Mayne, Blanche Potter, Mr. and Mrs. John G. Parr, Mrs. Lester Pfister, Mrs. Lloyd Pfister, W. A. Pfibeeger, Mrs. Charles Roberts, Mrs. Clyde Roberts, Francis Roberts, Mrs. Leo Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Seab Rider, Mrs. Lawrence Sutton, Sammy Sutton, Marlene Stitt, Mrs. Floyd Malcom. Mrs. Emery Shaffer, Mrs. Marie Shaffer; Shirley, Pauline and Roger Shaffer, Mrs. Elnora Schwitters, J. F. Schofield.

Other guests- Ross Boyd, Flanagan, Sam Culp, Washington; Mrs. George Crusius, Sterling; Mrs. Louis Crusius, Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Crusius, Emily, Crusius, Mrs. Harvey Crusius, Mrs. Clarence Crusius, Katherine Crusius, Bloomington; Mrs. Wm. Damman, Normal; Mrs. Geo. Damman and Lowell Damman, Bloomington; Mrs. Win. Fever, Rock Island; Mrs. Clarence Fever, Dean, Dale, Robert and Wallace Fever. Gridley; Mrs. Geo. Fell, Heyworth; Trosa; Leo and Helen Fitzgerald, Chicago; Mr. and Mrs. Donald Gaines, Kappa; Bob, Dick, Ted and Emery Garey DeLong; Earl Hembrough, Jacksonville; Mrs. Grace Hynes, Roberts, **Lewis P. Herr, Zearing Ia.; Relda Herr, Peoria;** Thomas and Will Jones, Peoria; Arthur Jacob, Oak Park; Elaine Lampe; Gridley; **Carl B. Muller, Peoria;** L. W. Powell, Roanoke; Mrs Clayton Rider, Gridley; Mrs. Robert Penticoff, Peoria; **L. W. Steele, Gridley;** Marjorie Shaffer, Maquon; Mrs. Thorne, Bloomington; **Peggy Withers, Chicago.**



Center Picture.

This picture shows those attending the reunion who had served as directors, the present directors, former teachers and the present one. Reading left to right:

Upper row--Louis Crusius, Bloomington; S. K. Sutton, Chas. T. Roberts, **Rich. Mayne**, Harry Malcom, Jesse Malcom (former teacher), Jacob Dressler, Lawrence Sutton, Lyle Armstrong, The latter three constitute the present board. S. K. Sutton held the record for length of service when he declined re-election a short time ago after serving 43 years continuously. He was succeeded by his son Lawrence.

Lower row seated: -Mrs. Tresa (Hynes) Fitzgerald, Mrs. S. K. (Frances Stambach) Sutton, Mrs. Francis (Agnes Stanibach) Hynes, Mrs. Earl (Emma Henry) Hembrough. (Jacksonville), Mrs. Daniel C. (Mary O Rourke) Kearney (Bloomington), Mrs. A. C. (Mary Roper) Jones, Mrs.. J. F. (Flora Down) Schofield, Miss Susie Jones (Peoria), Miss Rita Pierce (teacher), (last year and re-engaged for the coming term), **Mrs. Louis P. (Minnie Mayne) Herr (Zearing, Ia.)**. Another former teacher, Mrs. Arthur (Florence Kyser) Jacob of Oak Park attended the reunion but with her father J. H. Kyser left before the picture was taken.



Lower Picture.

The adults of this group are those present at the reunion who were pupils previous to 1900, thirty-nine years ago. The youngsters seated on grass are eleven of the thirteen pupils- enrolled the last term. (Two Patrick Kearney and Jean Monahan were not at the reunion.)

Upper row, standing- Louis Crusius Bloomington; Chas T. Roberts, George Crusius , Sterling; George Damman, Bloomington; John Hynes, Wm. Emmius, Lynn Biebus Chenoa; Francis Pfister Mr Haas (Raub, Ind; Ned Hynes, Fred Greiner. **Thomas Mayne Chicago**; E. R. Biebes, **Robt. Mayne**, Will Damman Normal; Horace Biebes, .

Middle row, seated; S. K. Sutton, George Fell Heyworth; Mrs. Claude (Gertrude Armstrong Stutzman ,Bloomington; Mrs.- Wm. (Jettie .Mayne) Pfleeger, **Minnie Hynes**, **Mrs. C. B. (Nellie. Mayne-) Muller Peoria**; Mrs. B. J. (Mollie Kearney) Lemon; **Mrs. Louis P. (Minnie Mayne) Herr Zearing, Ia.**; **Mrs. L. W. (Betty Mayne) Steele Gridley**; Mrs. L. W. (Einnia Damman) Powell Roanoke; Mrs. Tresa (Hynes) Fitzgerald, **Rich. Mayne**, Walter Berg.

The youngest, class Edson Dressler, Lyle McWilliams, Willie Armstrong, Carroll Gaines, Jerry McWilliams, Robert Berg, Rosemary Armstrong, Mary Pauline Berg, May Sutton, Agnes Roberts, Dora Sutton.

Old "Duck Pond"

In last weeks Journal we gave a brief history of Bethel School and how it became known as "Duck Pond" because of its being surrounded by a series of water pond and the Mecca for hunters of the Mallards, pintails and teals/ This was long before the ponds were tiled out but the name "Duck Pond" stuck and will no doubt prevail so long as any of the olden day pupils are alive to recall their happy days of yore.

Presents Awarded.

At the reunion a . number of prizes were given. Among them were the following:

Mrs. A. C. Jones- the oldest teacher flower basket.

Lynn Biebes,- 75 oldest pupil present. Had Thomas Lynch shown up he would have beaten Mr. Biebes by one year. Fred Greiner missed the prize by one year.

A bouquet was. sent to Mrs. Mary Damman of Secor for being the oldest living mother of an early-day pupil. Mrs. Damman could not attend the reunion. The flowers were taken by her daughter Mrs. L. W. Powell, who brought to the reunion the dinner pail in which she and other members of the Mr. and Mrs. Henry Damman family carried their noonday Bethel school dinners fifty years ago.

Mrs. C. B. Muller, - 70, of Peoria was the oldest woman pupil.

Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Herr of Zearing Ia. - came the longest distance 327 miles

May Sutton- 7 was the youngest pupil.

Dale Allen Rider- 3 months, was the youngest child.

Francis Pfister, - Charles Roberts and Ned Hynes are the only living members of the Duck Pond ball team which played in 1890, 91, 92, 93 and was never beaten.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. T. Roberts have sent children to Bethel for the past 25 years, and none of them was ever tardy So far as is known the most distant old-time pupils of Bethel school are Lewis Haas, Calgary, Canada; Gertrude (Haas) Sego, Saskatchewan, Canada, and Melker Vogt. Alberta, Canada. Mrs. Sadie (Sutton) Garvat of Tulsa, Ok., sent a letter to the reunion committee.

Old-time Birch Wielders.

We had hoped to give the name of every teacher employed by the district since its organization some 77 years ago, but are today unable to do so. However, Mrs. Lawrence Sutton promises to hunt through the records; if available and if she is successful we will present the list in a future issue.

Next Year's Reunion: . It was voted to hold a event on the, second -Sunday in July 1940. Mrs, Lawrence Sutton was elected President, Miss Edna Dressler as secretary with Miss Rita Pierce as assistant.

Letter from Former Pupil.

The following was written and sent by John H. Damman of Sanborn Ia. under date of July 10. John was one of the old-time pupils who with other children of his family got his noon lunch half a century ago from the Damman dinner pail mentioned else where in this article.

Dear Mrs. Sutton: When I came In to dinner today Mrs. Damman told me I had an invitation to attend a picnic at Duck Pond school Well, when I read the invitation I could see that it was impossible to come for the card said "Bring your dinner." You will understand that I could not do that for my lunch would be quite stale. As I sat on a binder this afternoon I thought of the good times we had in school at Duck Pond and of all the big boys and girls who were going when I first started to school. Miss Mary Roper was my first teacher. I did not like it at school that first day and when recess was over -and the bell was ringing I started for home but was overtaken by some fleet footed girl; I do not remember who it was. When I started to school we had such big fellows attending as Tlm Kearney, Jack Mulvihill, Jacob Crusius, Linford Biebes, Ephraim Biebes, Nick Roberts; Moses, Walter and Jesse Render. Joe Kridner, Thomas Lynch, Will O'Connell, Patsy O'Brien, Peter Davis, Sam K. Sutton; Adam, Henry and Philip Vogt, **Wilbur Mayne**, Jack Pfister (father of your illustrious Lester Pfister, Paul Huguet, Jake Greiner.

The about-grown-up girls were Minnie Ackerman, Grace Hodge, Eliza-beth Sutton, Laura Bowman, Anna Bowman Sophia G reiner, Sophia Huguet Lottie Montgomery and others whom I do not recall just now. The fellows more my age and who were in school the last few years I attended were Tom, Rich and Robert Mayne;. Charlie Arch and Frank Montgomery, Mike and Frank Lynch, Ed and Tim O'Connell, Will Kridner, Harry Hitch, Fred Greiner, Chauncey and Robert Ackerman, Robert Harley, Will and Tom Sutton, Frank, Peter and Charles Roberts; Louis, Henry and George Crusius. The Crusius family-mother, sister and all but Lou, I believe--were "lefties." Then there were Horace and Will Biebes. Horace was a heavy hitter and we always liked to, have him on our side.

Yes, there were the Dodger brothers Vern and Ray. When they moved from our district we got Guy Bodger, Mat and Ned Hynes, Francis Kearney, and James, George and Arthur Gee. I am sure there are others. I think of all of you sometimes. And the "fair maidens" of about my age-**Nellie and Bettie Mayne**, Minnie and Myrtie Bodger; Anna, Lucy and Eliza Bowman, ,Mary and Elizabeth Fell, Millie and Carrie Greiner, Grace Hitch, May Bowman, Tory and Tillie Berg, Mary Gee, Lizzie Crusius, Mary Roberts, Tess Hynes, Dora Pfister, Kate and Elizabeth Kearney, Mollie Kearney, Lizzie and Mary Kridner. There must be a few more but do not feel too badly about it, folks if I have not mentioned everyone. I expect to get back to El Paso some time this fall and may get to see some of you.

Perhaps someone wants to know about the family. Married, yes; children, four-three daughters and one son. The two older daughters are teachers; one has taught- in Highland Park, Ill. for several years and the eldest is librarian in the Coleraine Minn. public school. Our "baby " a graduate nurse is assistant superintendent of the Foote Memorial hospital at Jackson Mich. The son like his father is a farmer and lives across the road from us. He has three adorable children two boys and then a girl.; they are 7 5 and 3 years old. I forgot to say my Wife used to be Addie Evans of Panola and later of El Faso. We live on a farm two miles north of Sanborn . We are not very well and each day is plenty long for our strength. Mrs. Damman has help each wash day, keep a man all the time, this being the sixth year for our present man to be with us.

Say I was only kidding a-bout bringing my dinner. I know your hospitality pretty well. Some of my sisters or sisters-in-law may be there and there are Lizzie and Edna Dressler I would not be afraid to match up to them and tell them I had not- been fed lately. I hope you all have a very pleasant time together and if you continue the reunion that sometime I may meet with you.

Yours very truly,

John H. Jack Damman.